- VICTORY GARDEN -

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To

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N.S.

- PREFACE -

A preface is always a confession of weakness, since the good writer should always be able to interpret his ideas, if he has any, to the reader of his story, without extraneous explanation. However, the writer no matter how good he is, and how hard he struggles, can never be sure; even Shakespeare indulged in prologues and epilogues. After all a preface is a thing of no great importance since few read a preface; perhaps no one will ever read this one.

It's quite true; as you get old, you live over the past, because there's no more lusty living in reality. And you do not live over it truly, oh, no not at all; your mind suppresses all the failures, messes, and humiliations, and throws the searchlight upon happy emotional moments and little triumphs and actions motivated by a generous loving heart. Of course, memory tricks us and helps us to think the best of ourselves by incorporating into our chain of reality, tags of dreams, scraps of imagination, some drifting bars of haunting music, a lovely picture seen, some glorious lines written by someone else. Sometimes you ask; "Did I dream that or did it really happen to me?" It is very hard to disentangle the moth of reality, from the web of dreams, and when you have told a good tale a hundred times over, your friendly ego keeps adding and adding scraps, that emphasize your position as the central hero. Still it's very good fun living over the happy and successful past, for there is no more risk or danger and very little sorrow. Thinking back, remembered phrase and movement take on a new significance, and reveal phases of character quite unnoticed in youth.

Every book adds something or substracts something from our common dignity, just as each individual adds or substracts something. The realists pride themselves on writing down the facts about life

-- sometimes an exciting sexual episode in every second chapter -- though goodness knows, no one can write down the inner facts about anything. Business men are a little amusing when they frown, take a lofty attitude and look fondly at their financial reports. Any mathematician knows, that an answer to a problem is only an approximation, only a close approach to a hypothetical number or to zero or infinity, never quite arrived at; just as any draughtsman knows, that no human hand or man-made instrument can draw a perfect line, a perfect circle, or a perfect ellipse. Among writers, good poets arrive closest to the answers.

How lucky we are that memory eliminates the messes we've been in and the humiliations we've endured. For the realists are quite right, man's primitive instincts, and the governing forces of man, the finest of animals, are hunger, self-preservation, the desire to reproduce, egotism, selfishness, and a strange yearning for the good opinion of his fellows. Shall we therefore clamber down the dark shaft towards the centre or take off and drift through fluffy clouds, until we emerge into the upper sunlight, where angels zoom, swirl, roll, loop and play at prisoner's base?

VICTORY GARDEN

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I

"How lush and lusty the grass looks! how green"

It was late April, but there was a chill in the morning air. The ground was dry and crumbly enough to dig in, and it was unbelievable how many green weeds were springing between last years ridges and the stumps of faded cornstalks, especially those flat persistent fellows with a root long and strong as a parsnip's. During the winter, he had read that the plough was the farmer's worst enemy, that the man who had raised last year's biggest crop in Kansas, had not ploughed his land at all, but simply harrowed out his weeds and made shallow trenches with a cultivator. The theory was, that the best of the soil was on top and that the plough buried much of this too deep.

The report had caught his imagination; that had been one of his many faults; he had enjoyed doing and making things in new unconventional and untried ways; he could hardly bear to follow a recipe or a set programme, and he had often failed. People laughed at him he knew, and there was no use in saying; "I don't care, to Hell with them," for he knew, he did care even for the good or bad opinion of the humblest person. Sometimes he thought that the respect for public opinion, the desire to have a good name, was the strongest force to keep people on some kind of moral path.

For the fun of something new, he would not plough, but follow the plan of the Kansas farmer, nor would he shape his ridges up and down the hill-side, as he had always done but across the slope. There are always plenty of people in the world who know reasons for not doing this or that; some wise-acre would criticize his cross-ways planting. Last year he had planted up and down the slope, and in June, great

rains had come to wash all his good top soil to the bottom of his garden, to leave stones and rubble in the rows. Perhaps the rains would come again and this time wash away seed and ridges; he must have good lateral drains into which the hollows between the ridges could empty. Moreover he must not anticipate disaster but have faith, for without faith no man should cast seed into the ground.

He drove in stakes, strung a rope to keep him straight and began to dig out a deep furrow. Last year his cabbages and turnips had gone club-foot; that meant, he was told that his ground had grown old and sour and needed a heavy coat of lime. Lime could be got; he would cover his garden ground and spread it thick in the bottom of each furrow.

He dug steadily and completed four furrows. True a horse and plough could have furrowed the whole plot in two hours, but he wanted to do everything with his own hands. The world was at present a mad-house but the world needed food; perhaps it was a childish idea, but he would make his contribution by raising enough to maintain three average families.

He was getting tired now and tried to ease the strain on leg and shoulder muscles that had began to tug and pull on their own accord. He was not so old, but he had lived vigorously and worn out early. Straightening his back, he looked longingly at the shining lake; not a habitation in sight, nothing but spruce, hard-woods and alders to the very margin. From the lake's surface the morning mists were rising now twirling into the upper air like the aura of pale ghosts or filmy diaphanous angels in trailing lawn. What a day to fish the still-water at the head of the lake; trout would rise to a March Brown on a day like this, when the sun got higher. "Get thee behind me Satan", he exclaimed, and grasping his shovel, he began another furrow. This furrow went much slower. Presently his shovel clinked on something and he threw out a reddish-brown rounded stone. Not exactly rounded either; a circle about the shorter diameter and an ellipse about the longer; almost the shape of a duck's egg, though slightly larger.

He picked this stone up, weighed it in his hand and admired it. In fact he never could resist rounded stones; when they came damp and fresh from the ground they were fine in colour, though sometimes when dried disappointingly dull. He used to carry them over to the house and lay them about on tables, why he hardly knew. They were of no use except to scratch matches on, and they had been a nuisance to West Wind when dusting. Still she had never thrown them out or made any complaints, and the children had called them "Daddy's Stones".

Perhaps he liked these stones, because they were a tiny bit of the mystery of ages long past. The stone was some kind of quartz smelted by fierce fire, cooled, trundled up and down some ancient wave-swept beach, or spun in the pot-hole of some turbulent river before it was ground into that rounded shape of almost perfect symmetry. Long before man, the new-comer, had arrived upon this earth, his garden plot had been deep under water.

He abandoned his shovel, and carrying the stone in his hand, crossed to the northern side of his garden, and sat down upon the yellowed grass full in the sun, dangled his feet into his garden trench, and pressed his back against the thick young spruce that cut off the west breeze.

The pebble gripped in his hand stimulated some nerve and that shot a flash to a memory cell. "Trundled up and down some wave-swept beach;" that was the phrase that did it. He laughed as he recalled that craven crew, captain and mates in peaked glazed caps sitting forlornly on the boulders, as he and Tom had pulled in to land their man, and held their dory with the oars, just out of reach of the curl of the little breakers, that were trundling and rolling the beach rocks to and fro. He tossed the pebble in the air, caught it, laughed again and made himself more snug and comfortable by pressing his back more firmly against the spruce, just as he and other soldiers seated on the firing step, had

pressed their backs into the wall of the trench, when a shell burst near. He lit a cigarette; the sun was shining bright and warm ----------

"Here", cried mother, emerging from the fog-bank, just as they got the double dory off the beach, "Stick this basket in the eyes, and cover it with a flap of canvas; there's a hunk of bread and a bottle of water in it". She didn't tell them to be careful and not to get wet; she knew that they would get very wet and would not be careful. As they turned the dory, and headed into the stiff on-shore breeze, she called; "There'll be corned beef for supper, and boiled cabbage, apple-pie and coffee". That was the best bait to bring hungry boys, home early. Then, she drew her hand from under her shawl, waved, laughed her gay laugh and was lost in the mist.

A strange morning that, but then every morning on the sea is strange and different from every other, as different as two blades of grass or two lop-sided molecules. It was thick, and the land faded out almost at once; the ceiling was so low that it rested on the floor and the plaster was forty feet thick. Even at that, the gusty on-shore wind, ripped once in a while, a jagged hole in the plaster, to show a secondary flash of blue and give a promise of clear weather by noon. The sea was not running high, waves of perhaps of three feet, but these were short and sharp and had a narrow hem of white sewed along their crests. The flat-bottomed dory pitched, slapped and pounded on these short ground swells, and plenty of malicious spray sifted over the bows. Mother had known the old double dory would be wet, she had watched the sea through many years, and knew its tricks. They had four stout spruce oars, a dory in good trim, four strong young arms but neither compass nor land-mark; they knew however that they had to pull straight into the wind, and that it would take two hours against that breeze to reach the bar, four miles distant.

"Are you sure you saw her?"

"Sure".

"This is a sad day to go on a fool's errand".

"It's no fool's errand. I saw her plain."

"How much did you see?"

"Skysail and royals and once when the fog-bank tore I could see her t'gallant yard".

"She is big if she's got skysails. Sails furled?"

"Just clewed up."

"How do you know, she's on the bar?"

"I know she's on the bar; I tell you I saw her upper spars".

"Maybe she's in the deep, anchored in the lee of Nigger Island." "She's not anchored,; she's on the bar".

"How come; this is no wind to put a ship ashore".

"I don't know that but she's on the bar all right; her spars showed it, they had a big list; they were a third off straight".

"Port or Starboard?"

"Starboard if she's heading in, and she must be heading in".

"We'll soon know".

They tugged and strained at their oars and spoke no more. The wind remained steady in direction but decreased in strength, perhaps because the flood tide was now beginning to show its power. It had been low slack water when they had left the beach. After a while Tom pulled out the thick silver watch, tied by a leather boot-lace to the button-hole of his shirt pocket, and consulted it. He was the older; he carried the watch.

"We ought to hear something soon; we've been at it two hours and five minutes. I can tell by the state of the water, we're near the bar but I don't know what point".

"Listen".

They held the dory steady with their oars and listened. The little flattened hemisphere of fog that shut them in, was not more than sixty feet in diameter and twenty-five in height. Two boys alone in a world of fog!

"Perhaps we've crossed the bar and gone to sea".

"Don't talk like a fresh-water sailor; listen".

Nothing, nothing, nothing; not a sound, save the slap of the waves against the dory's bottom and the skirl of the sea wind; nothing in sight; not even a sea-gull or a stinking Mother Carey. One was a little afraid.

"Listen, listen, do you hear anything?" They sat still and steady, straining their ears to listen. Presently came to both a dim groan.

"It's the groaner; it's the groaner on the Light island".

"Now we're all right".

"We were always all right".

"But now we know where we are".

"If she's on the bar she'll be farther to port, for she didn't make the passage between bar-head and light island".

They pulled on shifting to port with the wind on an angle, and the spray stinging their left cheeks. The wind was their guide, the groaner their directing ray, they pulled easily for a few minutes. Then they heard it; the clang of a ship's bell, then another clang, then two sharp clangs in quick succession.

"She's there all right, pounding on the bar".

"And well aground I'll say".

"Aground forward anyway".

They pushed on with caution, and suddenly she loomed at them out of the mist; a great iron ship, grey on the top sides and red below the water-line, a monstrous bulk high above them with a sharp list to starboard. There she sprawled like a stranded whale dying on

the bar. Her loosely clewed sails, only a few of the bunt lines pulled taut, flapped and slatted against the yards, her running gear and blocks rattled and banged and as the long ocean swell lifted her stern and drove her stern deeper into the sand, her tall spars seemed to pitch forward and tug savagely at her slackened backstays. Altogether she was a pitiful and at the same time terrifying sight.

They pulled in under the lee of her starboard bow; no voice called down to them from the forecastle head. Tom shouted "Hello" but there was no reply. Now they were both afraid, afraid of the unknown, the most frightening thing in life, for it was clear that the ship was empty and abandoned for no apparent reason; what had happened, why was she empty; here was a dark mystery; would they find dead sailor-men on deck or in their bunks. They dropped back slowly to her starboard quarter, hearts pounding with awe at the strangeness. Then they were startled by a face peering over the rail at them, and by a voice that cried;

"Will you set me ashore?"

"Yes" answered Tom.

The face disappeared and after a moment, down dangled a blue bundle on a long rope's end. Tom untied the bundle and tossed it in the dory's eyes; then the sailor, high above them, made fast his end of the rope and, swift as a monkey, slid down and dropped lightly in the dory's stern. He sat down in the stern sheets, saying simply;

"I was asleep, they went away and left me alone". He was a sailor-man, that they knew by the way he had dropped into their dory, and by his general likeness to many they had seen years before. He was a swarthy man of medium with black hair and blue grey eyes and he had a lilt in his voice that was strange to their ears.

"I was sleeping and they left me" he repeated.

"The Ardmore of Belfast"; cried Tom, for there was her name in great black letters upon her canted stern.

"Ay, the Ardmore of Belfast, a sad unlucky ship".

"How long since did they go?"

"A little while since. They took both jolly-boats"

"Then they'd make for the groaner on the lighthouse island".

"Maybe, set me there; I was sleeping and they left me".

He spoke no more and they were too shy to ask questions. They pulled for the island, the bellowing of the groaner growing louder with each twenty strokes. Nor did the sailor-man ask who they were, whence they had come or whither they went. He seemed to know by instinct, and perhaps by the way they handled their boat, that they knew the sea and the lay of the land.

Now they kept the wind on their right cheeks and pulled steadily, till they heard the bang of surf and the mutter and growl of beach rocks trundled up and down. Suddenly the island with its rim of creamy breakers, lurched at them out of the fog, just as the ship had done. They knew the island shore, and inched westward till they could see the little improvised break water of beach rocks, the light keeper had piled. They turned and backed in cautiously. There seated on rocks, above high-water mark, they saw a group of men, twenty odd. What a crew! There was the foxy-faced captain (They could not think of him as the Old Man) with strands of yellow hair flying from beneath his glazed peaked cap, and two craven mates in peaked caps and twenty odd sullen, silent, sailor-men. What a crew to be trusted with such a noble ship! No boats were in sight. They backed in as close as they dared and their passenger, bundle in hand, leaped over the little breakers and waded ashore. He seemed to know that they did not wish to land. They pulled off, without speaking to the men on shore, but as the fog began to cast a dim curtain between them, the captain called out "Don't go aboard her, her spars will soon be coming out". To this advice, they answered nothing at all, but pulled back straight to the stranded ship.

Holding the wind on their left cheeks, they reached the ship easily this second time, and found shelter in the lee of her great listed bow. They lay easy on their oars and neither spoke; they were both wondering if they dared; what would they find on that empty ship; the mystery made their nerves tingle and the neck hair bristle.

Tom got up suddenly and made fast the dory's painter to the ring bolt of the lower bob-stay, then continuing the motion (Tom always liked to carry the rhythm of one motion into another) he began to climb up from one stay to another. The other boy followed and in a few seconds they were standing close together on the forecastle head. There they stood frozen for a moment looking and listening. Nothing stirred on deck, nothing came to their ears but the wash of the sea, the slatting of sails, whizz of wind, banging of loose running tackle, and the squeak and squall of labouring backstays. Nothing moved on deck, not a man, not a dog; she was abandoned, given up for lost; what cowards; stuck on a sand-bar in such a petty sea. Slowly they moved aft in single file, Tom leading. The deck was dry, there was not enough sea to break over her high quarter, but they had to look out for loose flying tackle and banging blocks. The yards were almost squared, for the ship had run in before the wind, but the ship's pounding and the lurch of the spars, had loosened sheets that whipped about. These they hauled taut on both sides as best they could, and made them fast with double hitches. They could do nothing with the labouring backstays.

They passed the waist of the ship, and came to the break of the poop. Here, they hesitated and looked at one another, for there is always reluctance in the hearts of sailor-men or those descended from real sailor-men, to set foot on the poop-deck, unless summoned to do a trick at the wheel or perform some other duty. That is the Old Man's territory; there he is doctor, lawyer, parson, navigator, food administrator, controller of life and death, king of the good ship, his kingdom.

But as there was none to bid them nor say them nay, they climbed the ladder and stood at last upon the very stern. Here by instinct, their feet told them what they wanted to know; she was afloat aft, only her iron stern and a quarter of her keel was stuck in the slushy sand. Here was a place of safety, for no tackle whipped here, and if the craven captain had spoken truly and the spars were coming out, they would certainly fall forward with the pressure of the wind and the lurch of the ship. Here aft, they would have come aboard had they been able. True the sailors' rope still dangled to wave tops, but it is no easy task to shinny up a wet dangling rope and the quarter gave no foot hold. Moreover there was no shelter aft for their dory, which now tailed off with the wind, in the lee of the tilted bow.

They had safety and time to look about them. Nothing sea-ward, nothing to port or starboard, nothing land-ward but a thick cover of grey wet fog. They could barely make out the winch on the forecastle head and the royals and skysails were quite obscured. They were not sure that they had done well in making fast the sheet ropes; had they been strong enough they would have hauled the yards around flat fore and aft, set up the loosened backstays, and eased the agony of the pounding ship. The sails were tolerably well clewed up in the bunt lines and here and there a gasket had been tied down, but on some yards the canvas bulged, flapped and ballooned. Under the quarter the long ocean swell smashed and bellowed, and with each blow the wheel, left hard a-port, twitched and squeaked.

To ease the tension, Tom made use of a homely proverb, "It's the squeaking wheel that gets the grease" for now they had to make a new decision; dared they enter the cabin. They hesitated; the tradition of the sea was in their blood; Tom had been born as they lay in the Doldrums south of the Line and the other boy, just before they reached

Valparaiso and their first memories were bound up with the heave of a ship's planking, under their unsteady toddling feet.

My mother she was merry and brave,
And so she came to her labour,
With a tall ship's spar for her doctor grave,
And the wheel for her comforting neighbour.

They knew the sanctity of the old man's cabin, but they had to go, so down the companion way they went.

It was a grand cabin as they expected (much larger and better than the cabin of the Mary) finished by skilled workmen in teak and mahogany. Two paraffin lamps, their brass sockets tilted drunkenly by the list of the ship, lighted the whole cabin dimly. Four smaller sleeping cabins opened off the main room, and the door of what was obviously the masters cabin slammed to and fro, to reveal a chest of drawers and a wide berth, with the bedding tossed in confusion. About the dark panelled walls were lockers, beneath these high couches cushioned thickly in red and beneath the cushions drawers with shining brass handles. In the centre of the cabin was a fixed mahogany table, about it twirling leather-seated chairs. The sky-light above, let through dull spots of dim gray light upon the polished table. Against the forward wall under the lighted lamps, stood an organ and sewing machine, on it a work-basket and two spools of thread.

"There's been a woman aboard".

Tom ran his hand lightly over the top of the sewing machine. "Not this voyage; last voyage maybe".

They went to the appropriate places and looked.

"He's taken sextant, log-book and chronometer with him".

"A fine log he'll have to write this day ".

"No books no pictures; not even a parrot to squawk at us and give us a start".

"There's nothing more frightening than loneliness and emptiness. There's no living thing on board this ship unless maybe its rats in the hold, cockroaches in the galley, or lice in the foc'sle.

The chart for the coast was thumb-tacked down on a side working table with lines and angles, cycles and epicycles scribbled o'er.

"They've been travelling some days by dead reckoning" said Tom scornfully. "Look, where they thought they was, sixty miles up the coast. Great sailor-men these lads. They run her off the wind till they hit the land".

"Like the old man used to say about one-eyed Barney. 'He steers south till the butter's used up, then west and hits Trinidad'".

Driven by a natural curiosity they looked into the cabins, pulled out drawers and opened lockers, to examine everything. There was a good stock of liquor aboard. They were honest boys, and took nothing that did not belong to them.

Then they climbed down into the ship's cool lazaret; nothing unusual there, ships stores, cans of paint, spare sails, spare coils of rope and light chains. They opened a door in the bulk-head and looked down into the dark mysterious hold. It was empty gloomy murk, like the daedal earth without form and void, but listening they could hear above the bang of waves and the groans of the sick hull, the rattle of stones far down by the kelson. "God a ' Mighty! she's in ballast with beach rocks! Where the hell do you suppose she was headed for".

"Maybe they were trying to lose her".

"Maybe; she's light; she aint lost yet. We'll stick aboard".

"She's a mystery ship".

"A mystery, a damn mystery. Anyway we can't do ourselves any good climbing down into the hold. She's in ballast all right and beach-rock ballast at that. Now where did she take on her beach-rocks".

"There's beach-rocks all over the world".

On deck they went, the wind had dropped but the blanket of fog still lay thick. They were hungry and thirsty, after their long row and the excitement of their adventure, and it was a long climb down the bob-stays, to bread and water in the dory's eyes. They knew well enough where the water-butts stood lashed down in the waist of the ship, and thither they repaired. How queer ship's water tasted after years of land spring water and the queer odour and acrid smoky taste evoked memories in both. From the water-butts they drifted to the galley; all their fear was gone now.

The cook's brown spotted apron lay crumpled in a corner, as if he had cast it off in great haste, but a coal fire still glowed between the bars of the grate, the kettle simmered and on the stove back, the big coffee pot steamed. It mattered not to them that it had been steaming there for hours. They got down mugs from the racks, rinsed them out, rummaged about till they found some bully beef, ship's biscuit and, strange to say, a pot of honey stowed in a dark corner for the cook's private use. They ate and drank and laughed at one another. Never had there been such a day.

"Luck to-day Tom".

"The day's young yet", he replied spitting out a shower of biscuit crumbs. It's only the strong coffee that's put heart into us".

With full bellies and nerves steadied, they sallied out again on deck. It was getting near noon now, the flood was three quarters full, the wind had lightened and was beginning to haul as it did on nine days out of ten, on that coast, in summer. From east, inshore, it hauled through south, sou-west, and even west, on a time-table as regular as that of a German gunner.

'Just wrong for a fisherman', Tom used to growl, "Head's him in the morning when he's itching to get on the bank, and head's him again afternoons homeward bound, when he wants to get in quick with his fish".

"The fog's going to roll out soon", said Tom. Let's get up on the top and have a look around when she clears".

Up towards the flat platform above the foresail yard, they climbed; the lubbers hole gaped above them, but of course they disdained that, and went round by the rope ladder dangling, for a couple of seconds, like two invading spiders in a filmy web. There, with their backs pressed against the spar, they sat on the flat top and swayed with the motion of the ship. Now there was no question of spars coming out, for the wind had dropped and dropped, and only light fitful breezes struck the ship on her starboard side.

"They'll be coming off maybe when the fog lifts".

"That crew certainly couldn't find their own ship in a bit of fog. They'd row their boats out to sea".

"Maybe they've holed their boats on the beach-rocks".

Two boats were missing from the ship and the davits, from which the falls dangled, writhed, and twisted, but the boys had seen no boats on the light island.

'Wait and see" said Tom, and like an old sailor, he got out his pipe, stuffed it, lit it, shielding the match in his big hands, blew a cloud of smoke through his nostrils as if he were a young bull in a morning pasture, and let the other boy have a puff from time to time. Then as they were well pleased with themselves, in fact supremely happy in their adventure, they began to sing the ballad of the coast; 'Johnny Mader's overboard and half-a-mile astern'.

For quite a long time they sat comfortably on the top; they were well-clad and the air though damp, was not cold; the heave of the ship under their bottoms, and the slight lurch of the big spar, behind their backs, were comforting movements. Now the wind had hauled further through the south, and was almost sou-west; now the fog-bank began to stir restlessly in its seat on the sea, like a lingering guest,

that rises to say good-bye but knows not how to make his departure. Far down below they heard their dory banging gently against the iron stern; they should do something about it they knew, but they were too happy and comfortable to move; at the worst she could but chafe off a little yellow paint. A patch of sky, swift as a blue-bird's wing, flashed suddenly shoreward. "The patch on the Dutchman's breeches" said Tom senteniously. Further westward hauled the wind till it became the complete shore breeze; now the flood tide had almost reached its height.

Suddenly, they stopped talking and sat still listening; a new terror gripped them; there was a new movement in the ship; at the very same moment both knew; the ship lifted by the flood-tide and her lofty hull pushed by the off-shore wind, was slipping off the bar. They felt glued to the platform; they were momentarily frozen; for comfort, they pressed their backs hard against the great yellow spar.

"She's slipping off the bar".

"We'll drift out to sea on her ".

There was a silence that seemed long, till Tom said;

"What's anchors for?"

"We can never shift them".

"We can try. What would the old man do, if he was here?"

The ship was quite afloat now; this time they went down through the lubber's hole, hands clutching, feet groping for the rigging, and ran quickly to the foc'sle-head. Sure enough, there was a kedge anchor, perhaps two hundred pounds lying on deck, the chain through the big hawsehole and the rest coiled in a chain locker; they could heave that over the rail easily enough.

"Come on Tom, come on let's heave her over quick; we don't want to drift to sea in this hooker".

"Wait, wait, till she drifts clear of the bar. She's going straight out; its slack water of the top flood now and the breeze'll push her along.

"Don't wait too long".

"A hundred yards won't kill us; the wind'll be in again tonight and her tail's got to swing clear. We'll anchor her on good holdin' ground in good deepwater.

"What about our dory? Won't the kedge smash our dory?"

Tom kicked off his boots, grabbed a rope-end and was down the bob-stays, in the time space between two breaking waves. He dropped in neatly, paddled the dory amidships, cried "Make fast your end", and came up the rope quick as a monkey, his stockinged-feet pressed against the plate seams of the ship's iron side.

"Shall we heave now".

Tom pulled out the thick silver watch, the old man had given him before he went away.

"Give her two minutes; she's driftin slow; then we'll heave".

It seemed an endless time, before he gave the signal. They heaved upward and threw outward; splash went the kedge far down below, and the chain began to rasp slowly out through the hawsehole.

"Get a turn on the winch, and we'll snub her, when the chain-locker's half-empty".

They snubbed her; for a few seconds they could sense the kedge dragging, till the fluke caught in some bottom rock ledge and she held. Now she headed straight up into the shore breeze and rode easily with peace and upright dignity.

Then to the starboard-bow went Tom to look over the big anchor, hanging in the starboard cathead. A good one was Tom, never satisfied to do things by halves.

"We can get this brute off and anchor her proper, if we can find a bar".

That meant another visit aft to the lazaret, they went together and fetched two short bars, they knew they would find there.

They got the big anchor loose and unlashed, and when they were ready, they prized the pawl out of the winch and let her go. What a splash! What a rattle of great chain! Again terror crept into their hearts, for what they had dared to do.

"Ease up and let the kedge chain run now, till the big anchor catches".

Tom held the lever on the winch, knocked in the pawl, when some big chain had run and signalled to make fast the kedge.

"She'll hold now and ride easy chain in this wind and sea; just as long as she isn't straight up and down to bob her heart out. This ship's ours as far as I know", and he lit his pipe again, and strutted like a sailor-man, and both let out whoops of joy. When they had time to look up at the sky, they saw the great bowl above them, a patch-work quilt of ragged blue and sulky grey.

"She'll clear in ten minutes and they can see us from the light island".

"What then?"

"We stay. She's ours. Wait and see".

They had another hefty swig of coffee in the galley to celebrate and hearten themselves; they were not afraid of a good ship floating free, only afraid when she lay wounded and groaning on the bar; they did not know how much she was wounded or how much water she was making; she was light in ballast and would not make much. Again they climbed to the top to watch and look about them. The fog lifted over the land and retreated sullenly seaward, the sun shone bright and warmed them. Presently they saw the two ship's boats put out from the light island. As they drew nearer they could see the glazed caps of master and mates in the stern sheets of one, and two men in civil dress in the other. Tom soon picked them out with his good sea eyes.

"It's the light keeper and old Greenwood harbour master and ship-surveyor from Ramshag".

"We'll get fair play; he knows the old man". They were not quite sure in their hearts, whether they would be scolded or commended, for interfering with a great ship. After all they were only boys of sixteen and eighteen.

"Let's have rope ladders over for them; they'll never get aboard else, unless they send a sailor man up the bob-stays". When the boats came close the boys hove two ladders over the port side, made them fast, and waited in nervous apprehension. Oars rattled below, and old Greenwood, a master in his time, first appeared dragging his great firm belly over the taffrail.

"This ship's ours" said Tom boldly. "We found her abandoned on the bar; took the last man out of her and anchored her in the deep; we claim salvage on her".

"Maybe you're right. But that's for the Underwriters' Court to decide. Maybe you're right. You're bold lads. Who are you Captain Ed's boys?"

"Yes Sir".

Two by two, slithered over the rail, dungarees silent and indifferent, glazed caps shame-faced and sullen.

"Here's your ship captain; these two lads anchored her for you. You won't have to chase her across the Atlantic". The master said never a word.

" Try the pumps now", shouted old Greenwood. He felt the heave of a ship again under his great bulk and again he was a Bluenose Skipper.

"See if she's started a plate and is making water".

The pumps sucked almost at once; she was not leaking.

"You lads can go home now; I'll look after your rights" said old Greenwood.

"Will you have a drink to take you home?" asked the

foxy faced captain his ragged yellow hair trailing in the breeze.

"We don't drink", said Tom. But what he meant and everyone knew it by his intonation; 'We don't drink with cowards' for many a time, they had taken a pull for fun out of the old man's rum jug.

So they pulled their double dory homeward against a head-wind, well pleased with themselves.

Mother came into the kitchen with beads of dewy fog on the shawl about her head. She had been to the post, the boys were doing the supper dishes in the sink.

"What's the local gossip old lady? You always pick up a spicy bit at the post-office."

"Wash out the dish-rags and cup-towels and get them clean you two wharf-rats".

"Run along and mind the baby; we're the two champion kitchen mechanics of the world".

She had in her hand a long white envelope.

"Here's the bad news. It's addressed to you two jointly; shall I slit it open?"

"Slit away", said Tom, without looking up, but giving a hearty nervous twist to the steaming dish-rag.

There were two cheques in that envelope, each for $2250.00. Magic numbers never to be forgotten 2250, like 1066, 1588, and 1815! "Little enough" said mother to hide her feelings, "She was worth sixty thousand dollars, if she was worth a penny. Now Tommy my master kitchen mechanic, you'll have the biggest, safest best engined boat on the coast, and you~~and you~~ reader of books, you're going to college. But don't turn parson; go after the hard stuff. Now God be praised, I've hatched me a high-line fisherman, and a scholar. The Ardmore of Belfast" she went on softly, "she's brought the cargo of our dreams made real; who built her, who owned her, who mastered her, who pushed her in here on the bar? The Ardmore of Belfast; she's changed everything. I never heard of her;

perhaps she's a fairy ship, but we'll know all the hard facts about her when the old man gets home.

II

"All things in common nature should produce without sweat or endeavour".

Youth comes at the wrong time, he reflected, as he dug deep with clutching fingers, to get at the root of a clump of chickweed, that was throttling two carrots; in youth, you have plenty of pep and no wisdom, in age you have sometimes a little wisdom, but no pep. Certainly no pep for physical things, though the mind and imagination still seemed to click along. Men should really go to college at fifty or even sixty. What fun it would be to sit of an evening in a quiet common-room talking about what you'd been reading, or learning, or experimenting with throughout the day. If you did that when young, you'd be dubbed high-brow and bore. Boys in college, as he remembered, seldom or never discussed in private, what they were working at in class-room or laboratory; their thoughts and revealing talk, ran on how to get more money from home, a new light overcoat, the touch-down made last Saturday, or the desire to kiss and tickle Nellie. At fifty -- sixty at any rate -- these matters had assumed other proportions; enough money had been made, three overcoats were available, touch-downs were out of the question, and Nellie, now president of the I. O. D. E., was a stout staid and respectable grandmother.

But the real trouble with flaming youth, was that it seldom understood, how hard it is to learn anything thoroughly, and how long to accomplish the worth-while. It wanted to leap into everything, and was content to get the apparent answer without labouring over the theory or deducing the formulae. At least that had been his trouble in youth.

Take this business of growing things well, of farming in general, and raising fine animals, for instance; people used to say scornfully; "He's a farmer", as if a farmer needed neither wits nor brains. Really to be a good farmer one had to be more observant, acute,

and wide-awake than anyone else. He had to learn to take occasion by the hand and fit his daily actions to weather, sun, wind and rain, know the quality, chemical composition, and texture of his soil, understand drainage, know when, and how to plant, gather and husband his crops, and the habit, custom, temperament of all domestic animals. He must learn how to combat intelligently all kinds of pests, insect and withering blight, and to burn the suspected host in October; even the sly deer that came by night and melted wraithlike into the ground mists, could destroy a field of beans if not shut out by an electric wire.

Last year his squash had been a failure; they had grown luxuriantly with broad healthy leaves adorned with many a handsome yellow flower, male and female, but there had been no sturdy elliptical tough-skinned off-spring. Jason, his only neighbour, on the other hand, had had a bumper crop.

He had asked Jason the reason and Jason had laughed and continued to whittle on his pine stick. Jason was like and unlike a banker; the banker's assets were cash and if your credit was tolerably good, he lent you some cash with perhaps a little condescension; Jason unlike the banker had no cash, but he had a fund of practical information acquired by observation, by trial and error, and this he lent out grudgingly. No one had taught him, why should he yield his hard-won secrets to anyone else; that was his point of view. Like the banker he must be asked humbly and politely, and even then he only paid over a haunting cryptic answer "there were no bees", said Jason and walked away. Now what did that mean? "Athens will be saved by her wooden walls", how the Athenians had worried their hearts about that utterance. At last the significance of the local oracle's remark, had dawned on him.

As he finished the last clump of chickweed in the carrot row, he reflected that there were no bees zooming about this summer either. Bees must be subject to plagues to Black Deaths that decimated their Londons. What sorrow, what apiarian wailing of widowed queen and fawning drones!

He stopped weeding and walked over to his house, to get the tail feather of a partridge, originally saved for the best of pipe-cleaners. Returning, partridge feather in hand, he began work on his squash blossoms. Again this season there were no bees, lusty yellow fellows, neither small busy honey bees nor indolent bumble-bees, to take off from one yellow petalled landing strip and land upon another, to crawl deep among the stamens, their legs and hairy bodies powdered with yellow pollen dust. He must pinch-hit for the bees, if he wanted squash. He twirled his feather deep in the false male blossoms till it was dusty with yellow and twirled it again in the deep cups of the blossoms, that had a green bulge below the flower. Among these squash citizens, the males were named false and the females true; if they had love songs then, the burden of these songs would be the reverse of ours. This was light work and great fun; this was applying knowledge to make life grow anew; this was assisting nature; this was increasing and multiplying; this was tricking the squash ladies into bearing babies, Willy-Nilly ; artificial but effective. There were some two hundred lady-blossoms, and when he had finished his job as procurer, his back was tired enough. He sat down by the warm spruce and lit his pipe. Well he had learned something from Jason, something from many people as he had drifted along through life.

"Yet all experience is an arch where thro'
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move".----------

"You're late", said mother as he came in by the kitchen door.

" We got a packet in the seine to-day; the big fir-wood buoys were all pulled under".

"Where's Tom?"

"He said he'd stay and split a few more; he thought they might be soft by the morn".

"Take him down some hot supper presently, he'll be there till midnight. How about the door on the fish-house?"

"We fixed the old hinge. It's all right."

"Yes, he may be there till midnight. Tom likes fish".

"And you don't".

"Not much".

"You like to waste your time reading books better".

"There has to be all kinds of men in the world Mum".

He hung up his oil-pants, sequinned with herring scales, in its accustomed place behind the kitchen door, scrubbed his face and hands in the sink and sat down at his place. There was a pickled ox-tongue that night for supper. When he took a good look at her, he saw that her eyes were shining, and knew she had a secret. "What's on your mind Mum? What for you're grinning like a Chessy Cat? Did a letter come from the old man?" "No, no letter, but I was down to Ramshag to-day".

" Walked?"

"Oh, no, no walking for me" she said sticking out hip and elbow in her favourite impish gesture. 'James' said I' we'll take out the Rolls Royce to-day". We laughed. Even if we were a little down on our uppers, mother had been round the world three times with the old man, and knew a thing or two.

"And what did you discover in the big city old lady?"

"I took the Algebra book down to the priest and school

teacher. Neither of them knew much; the priest some church Latin and the teacher how to help kids draw pretty flags on the blackboard".

"Then you didn't get anywhere".

"I did, I did, I questioned them so close, and asked so many questions, that I found out the secret in my own head. There's nothing to this Algebra at all, unless it leads to something we know nothing about; there's nothing to it but learning the rules and filling in formulas, they show you how to prove. It's easier than picking up chips. You know we've been stuck and puzzled over quadratic equations and series and binomial thorem; well, quadratic equations is nothing but filling in formulas, and so are the silly series, and binomial theorem, God help our silly wits, is nothing but a short cut in multiplication".

He gazed at her in amazement and admiration, and gulped his coffee. Mother's coffee was always hot and strong.

"Take Tom's supper down now; when you get back, I'll have the dishes done and I'll show you".

When he got back, she was sitting at the kitchen table, smiling at a scrap of yellow paper, that lay before her.

"There's the bullet that goes through the heart, and knocks down the ugly giant named quadratic equations. Sit down now and read that over twenty times, then write it down ten times and sing it five times".

We laughed together and began to sing the song of the stuttering sailor-man; 'Johnny Mader's over board, and half-a-mile astern'.

He learned the formula and never forgot. Still he could see that yellowed scrap of paper, that seemed the beginning of everything; its exact shape, square only one one corner ragged on other sides, its exact place on the table oil-cloth covered with sprigs of butter-cups, and in black letters the magic formula

$$\frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

He read it over and over, he wrote it down, he sang it not knowing what it meant; no need of tablets whereon to set it down; it was in his memory forever.

Then with the air of a minor prophetess, she showed him what a, b, and c stood for.

"Now, you see", she went on triumphantly, "you can solve any of these equations, without fussing around with factoring or completing the square. All you do is to fill in a, b, c in the formula; the rest is arithmetic. And here's the main point, if 4ac is bigger than b^2, then the number under the square root, sign will be minus, and that's no go, for no number multiplied by itself can be minus, and there can be no sensible answer. And you know, we've found out, that there are always two answers to a quadratic; well, the plus sign before the square root sign gives one, and the minus sign before the square root gives the other. It's really as easy as eating apple pie. Now we won't have to bother our heads about whether problems can be solved or not. We'll know".

By the time Tom got home from the fish-house, they had done a whole page of problems and were flushed and triumphant.

"There's some sense in Trigonometry; that's good for sailor-men and surveyors, but there's little sense in this Algebra up to now. It's just fussing about with letters instead of figures, and there's not much to it, when you take the trouble to learn the rules and how to establish them".

"I can learn Algebra Mum and pass the entrance, but how about the sixth book of Virgil; that's a sticker".

"You better stick to the fish", said Tom grinning at us. "There's money in fish, and we had plenty of nothing, till the " Ardmore" banged ashore".

"Be quiet Tom or I'll stand you in the corner". Tom was

six foot two and weighed one hundred and eighty-five pounds, but they always played the game with Mum, that they were still little boys.

"Did the old man ever own a grammar book?"

"How often have I told you not to call him the old man. I'll have to stand you in the corner too, with Tom.

"That's what mates and sailor-men call him, when he's not around".

"But you're neither mate or sailor-man, and it's only by the grace of God that I've kept you two out of the foc'sle. To you he's pa, or papa, or father, or dad".

"None of those names are half tough enough for the old man". She laughed, we all laughed. "Yes, the old man's best where he is just now, loading guano on the Chili coast. When he gets home, he still thinks he's sailing a ship".

"He'll land in fish-house or foc'sle yet" prophesied Tom.

"He won't, he won't, he's quick at figures and reader of books; for once I'm going to have my heart's desire, and land him in College".

"But the Latin Mum, the Latin; if only it had been French or Spanish. Did the old man ever own a latin grammar book"?

"If he did all his books went down in the "Mary" and the dog-fish are learning Latin off the Needles".

"Then we're sunk".

"Can't Latin grammars be bought, and the priest in Ramshag, he can gabble church Latin; he must have a grammar book".

"Nothing can beat you Mum".

"If he has no book, I've got a poetry book up-stairs and we'll learn the whole ruddy thing by heart."

And they did. Never-to-be-forgotten scraps floated in his memory; Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes----------

Facilis decensus Averni;
Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis;
Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,
Hoc opus, hic labor est.

And when the band of eager youth flashed forth on the Hesperian shore, he caught through the verb 'flashed' a glimpse of the sun glinting on polished armour and a new romantic vision of what life must be ----------

"Is everything that's printed true Mum?"

"Silly boy".

"You're forever telling me not to forget what I read; here's a funny one in the paper;

A lanky quaker, rose in meeting and said; "I shall never never forget the last words of my dying brother. He sat up and cried ----------." Then the lanky quaker halted, rubbed his chin, scratched his head and stammered out; "Excuse me friends, his last words have just slipped my mind for the moment".

"Silly boy", she said, her eyes shining. "Get your Latin book". "Here's another Mum; A stranger came into a back-woodsman's shanty, and saw a long pole burning in the fireplace, with ten feet of end sticking out in the room.

'Isn't that inconvenient' said the stranger.

'Oh No', said the back-woodsman; 'We shove her up, as she burns off, and it saves my wife a lot of wood-cuttin'.

She had to laugh at that, but she took the paper away and stuck the Latin book under his nose.----------

He was in the presence of a good scholar for the first time in his life, his knees felt wobbly as if they were hinged to bend side-ways and both back-ward and forward. He was not in the least like what he thought a scholar would be. He had imagined a scholar as a thin, pale, high-browed, low voiced man, and he had been worried about his own height, weight and ruddy cheeks, lest these should prove serious deterrents in attaining the mountain peaks of scholarship. But this man, head of the college, before whom he stood trembling now, was neither thin, pale, high-browed or soft-voiced. He was a huge hulk of a man, rosy-cheeked with a hugh head, bald except on the sides, so that he could

not tell whether the forehead was high or low, whiskers streaked with grey, eyes that flashed and shone and rolled strangely, and when he talked he shouted. The gown slung carelessly over a crumpled suit was dusty. His hands and feet were large. 'He might', thought the boy, 'Have been a master stevedore'.

"You're just passed the entrance by the skin of your teeth. Mathematics good, English fair, Latin very bad."

To the front-back sideways action of his knees, was now added a rotary motion.

"Do you think you've got preparation enough to do the work here?"

"I don't know".

"Perhaps you'd better go somewhere for a year and learn more".

"I know how to work night and day. I want to try here".

"Where's your father?"

"At sea. He lost the 'Mary'. He's mate on the 'Ethel' now".

"What schooling have you had?"

"Not much. I was at sea till I was twelve; the Ramshag school was five miles off. We hadn't so much after he lost his ship, and I had to help my brother with the fish".

"How did you learn your Algebra and Latin?"

"Mother and I learned it together."

"By the kitchen table?"

"By the kitchen table".

The apparently savage old man, was silent now for a moment. The boy did not know that a great warm, tender, heart beat within that great rough body, and that his savagery was only a defence. Nor did he know, that the old man at that moment was dreaming of a kitchen dimly lighted by a paraffin lamp, a book on the table and a patient mother bending over his shoulder.

"You've got a clever mother then".

Now the boy in turn was silent; he could speak to no one of mother; there was nothing like her on this green earth; there were no words to describe her; you had to see her and know her to understand;

'The girl like the Salem Clipper
Her back as straight as a hunting knife
And eyes as clear as the Dipper".

"Have you got any money at all?"

Then the boy took out his bank-book, and laid it on the desk as mother had told him to do. The old man looked at it, and raised his shaggy eyebrows.

"Tom and I anchored the 'Ardmore'. Tom got a new fishing boat, a good one, and I was sent here. I'm to be a scholar."

"So you're the 'Ardmore' boy. Did you want to come here, do you really want to learn and be a scholar?"

"Yes, more than anything".

The old man cleared his throat and stared hard at the home-spun suit and the sea-boots the boy was wearing.

"You'll have to get a new set of sails for this voyage laddie. Come and eat with me at noon, in the white cottage yonder, and after dinner, my wife will take you down to a store and show you what to buy"

"I'm in then?"

"Signed on. Get your dunnage stowed".

He was on his way to the playing field, and dribling a foot-ball down the corridor as he should not have been doing, and was reflecting, that it would have been much more sensible to have played foot-ball with a round ball, since no one could predict the direction an elliptical ball would take, when he heard his name called. There at

the foot of the steps, leading up to his apartment, stood the man he admired most and from whom he got most. He expected a reprimand and with the edge of his cleated boot, beached the foot-ball behind a radiator; perhaps the murk of the corridor would hide it. He walked the length of the corridor as boldly as he could.

"You've won the Shakespeare prize". Everything in life always seemed the opposite to what he expected; twisted events sprang at you, great things in a moment became little and little things great; anticipated moments in realization were vapid and stale, and unexpected moments full of a sudden blazing glory. Suddenly his tongue was too large for his mouth; he could think of no word of thanks and could express nothing; his heart began to pound; at last he was at the foot of the mountain.

"It's a complete set of Shakespeare in separate volumes; the Temple edition".

Oh God if he could only speak. At last he stammered out;

"Mother will be glad", and then knowing that he had said something childish and foolish, he hung his head, and turned and walked away without a word of thanks. He was sorry, for he was most anxious to have that man think well of him.

But what foot-ball he played that afternoon; he could run, and kick, take a pass, and tear a hole through the line as never before. He was so rough and strong, that the captain tapped him on the shoulder, grinned and said, "We may need the second team another day, you know".------

The chapel though crowded was deathly still; there was an atmosphere of expectancy and suppressed excitement; it was to be a choice between three and one was a much better scholar than he was. He sat in the third row from the back, a crony on either side. He was wearing his worst suit and long boots; he was one of big shots now; he was one of the makers of manners and traditions now, and had discovered that the roughest of clothing, and not smart suits, was the true toga virilis of the campus. He wiggled his toes in his boots, and looking down was glad to see some herring scales, still sticking to the instep. He had given Tom a good lift with the fish, last summer. Then he looked at the broken reeds on the back of the organ, and then up at the full length heroic size portrait of the founder, that hung between the stained-glass windows. Benign, pompous, wealthy, philanthropic, wise though not learned; it was impossible that he had ever been a boy, or a child in arms; he must have sprung like ~~Minerva~~ Athena fully armed from the head of Jove; he must have been born a complete founder.

Now the faculty filed in and he heard his name announced as the winner. He felt the same intoxication, that he had felt on the day he discovered, that the earth was only a second rate planet revolving about a second rate star. Everyone was looking at him; he was expected to say something; two husky pals hoisted him on his feet and there he was dumb and mute. He managed to mumble out "thanks", I'll do the best I can", and bolted from the chapel. Through the deep snow he ran to his room, and locked himself in. On his bed he began to cry to howl he knew not whether with anguish or happiness;"Oh God, Oh God Oh God" he kept saying over and over; perhaps he was praying-----

The sending of thattelegram; the yellow paper seemed hot under his hand as he penned it;

'I've won the scholarship mother'.

That telegram had travelled twenty miles by horse or foot or boat. Some unknown friendly soul had hastened the message, for before night-fall he had a return telegram.

'Keep cool now. Who else could win the scholarship. It's all in knowing the formulas. The old man will be home in June. He's going to get a ship again. Tom will be married in August. At last we're out of the doldrums.'

Mother.

III

"I would not wish any companion in the world but you".

Thinning the rows was always a hateful business for him; it seemed both cruel and wasteful to dig out young growing plants, and cast them in the rows to wither in the sun. It had to be; many must die in order that a few might survive and flourish. He knew right well as he bent over his rows, that carrots should be three inches apart, parsnips four inches, turnips seven inches and cabbages at least twelve inches, but in spite of that knowledge, he kept reducing the spaces to two, three, six, ten and even lesser distances. He wondered why he did this; was the motive greed or indolence? Or was it because he was loath to kill young things just beginning to grow and live? One of the first two named, was, he was sure, the real motive.

For these young vegetables, he was a kind of supervising tribal deity, that favoured one individual and put a curse upon another; he plucked out one carrot, flung it to withering death and let another no better or stronger, grow and fulfill its destiny. Had the plants, he wondered, any pleasure in growing together; did the carrots with their tops of delicate green, shyly admire the ruddy beets or aspire to scarlet runners, that twirled toward the sky, or desire the mauve-coloured summer-savoury with its aura of gracious fragrance? After a gentle rain and a flash of sun, the plants seemed to enjoy growing, and often he had imagined that grown carrots tugged from the earth, emitted a regretful sigh. A lie, a sentimental lie, and he was sick of lies and liars; he was ashamed that his imagination and desire to make an effect, had so often led him far from the truth; cunning, trickery and lies only became virtues in war, when employed against the enemy.

However, these plants certainly had furtive lives of their own quite independent of him or his; sly things went on at night and

even at broad noon. Then the impudent bumble-bees, swaggering soldiers in coats of yellow, went buzzing and booming from flower to flower, crossing his squash with the pumpkins, even with virginal cucumbers and musk-mellon, producing all kinds of strange children.

These vegetables were dependent on him for sowing, manuring and watering, in an excessively dry period, and yet they maintained a dignified aloofness, a strange independence. They never cadged upon him; they were trustworthy friends, who asked no favours. If he failed to hoe and cultivate, they registered no complaint; if he failed in his duty as a weeder, they uttered no reproach but simply developed no sizeable fruit, they formed a dignified democracy, under a benevolent dictator,not of their choosing.

In fact, vegetables growing in ridges were like settlements of men and women, the rows were the street, the ridges lines of houses; only the vegetables were fixed and could not help themselves much. They took wind, weather and sun as it came, and were dependent upon him as the supervising force, that organized and directed the garden. To the garden, he was the tribal deity, before whom the vegetables might have raised their hands, blown trumpets, clashed cymbals, sung hallelujah in adoration or supplication, had they been able. He alone, could save them from tribulation; he was the Medicine Man, who by spells and incantations, charms and potions, kept their complections clear of spotting blight, warded off devouring potato-bug, discouraged the stinking squash-fly, delayed the nasty patient corn-borer, led to poisoned death the malicious cut-worm and rooted out the greedy portulaca weed. With his magic powder and lime, he cured the infant cabbages of club-foot.

Villages were like gardens, yet men had done better and worse than the plants and insects, that had been on this earth long before them. The villagers could think their own thoughts and

look after themselves a little, in spite of selfish interests that prayed upon them. How well men had done in an instant of time, to rise from a swampy jungle, tear out trees, make cleared fields and roads, and build little boxes of houses in rows, in which to find shelter! Quite a long way from the reek of the steaming jungle, and the naked low-browed savage with a wooden spear.

Perhaps, God brooded over His villages, weeded, cultivated and watered, as he did his garden. God must take a long-range view. To Him, a thousand years or perhaps a million years were but a day. To men, who of necessity, took a short range view, He seemed to supervise His villages, His towns, His world, singularly badly, for now His young plants had been uprooted and left to wither in the heat of five years of hellish war, and His world was full of sorrow and mother's wailing for their children.

"Surely morning never wore to evening,
But some heart did break".

Poor little Jackie, lying somewhere in the rubble of Dieppe, victim of that ill-conceived expedition; little Jackie who had been such fun, had trouble with his V's and had always talked of gegetables and my gelget suit. He's never been strong on vegetables or gardening either, had Jackie. But he must not think of such things as that, he was only one of many who had perhaps endured more. He must go back to remembering that he was the tribal deity of his garden, go back to thinning carrots and keep an eye on those low-flying white butterflies, that were eyeing his cabbages and cauliflowers amorously.

He thinned another row of carrots tore out a few clumps of chick-weed, and since it was a dull day, though warm, fetched a bag to make a dry seat by the spruce. A squirrel on a tall tree near-by amused him; it chattered and scolded, obviously saying; "Go away, you have no business here, these are my trees, get off my land". Another squirrel joined him, probably his wife, since they seemed in perfect accord, in ordering him off their property. When he did not move,

they continued in long angry speeches, addressed to him, and one another. Probably the male was showing off. It was very comfortable sitting still listening to squirrel oratory and watching the garden grow ----------

"When I was a small boy playing with other boys at the wharf's end, we used to look down into the water and sometimes see a sculpin on the bottom, and play a cruel trick on him. He's an ugly fish full of horns and spikes and with a big greedy mouth, and he's a glutton for punishment. We'd let down one baited hook, which he's swallow, then a second hook, then a third, and sometimes he'd swallow a fourth. Then we'd draw him out on the wharf and slaughter him after the cruel manner of boys. Tonight I am the sculpin, I willingly swallow bait, hook, and sinker, and you are the boys on the wharf."

There sat the Anonyms, twenty-five tight-lipped Englishmen, all younger yet curiously older, more disciplined, more restrained, than he; even as he rose, Tom as if in reproach, began to shake out his one hundred and one strokes upon the mellow evening air. Who were they? He could not know; he did not even know their names. Two Americans there were among them, but they were already of two years standing; they were dressed like Englishmen and had already assumed their drawling manner. He, on the other hand had been in residence only three weeks and did not know their ways; he was an invited guest and a possible candidate for membership. For a long time he sat quietly while light banter went round, which the Americans took in good part and returned in kind. But presently there was a snotty remark with the barb of a sneer in it, a reflection on his home land and his home people, and he felt the hair bristle on his neck, and he was moved to speak as is a quaker in meeting. With big clutching hands, he tried to hold himself in his chair, but something stronger

than himself relaxed his gripping hands, and hoisted him on his feet.

The motion before the Society was; "Resolved that it would have been better, had Columbus never discovered America". A bait, a bait, an obvious bait; he had been brought there to be made a fool of, and he would be a greater fool than they expected. Let the hurricane roar. Mother was telling him; 'Sit down laddie sit down; don't let them bait you' but some angry force pushed him on.

"I'm the sculpin, I swallow the bait. The slightly veiled implication of this motion is, that the Rhodes Scholars are not much wanted about these colleges, that they will introduce something rude and uncouth, into your smooth slick society. That's the impression, I get from your club, and from some of your officials. I won my scholarship by hard work and I am here to learn, not to be liked, nor shall I change my home ways, to suit the convenience or win the approval of any of you.

I travelled a good many hundred of miles to get here and had no knowledge of the rules and regulations of this university, nor the time of your term opening. I arrived by misadventure ten days early. At the gate, I was instructed to report to the senior censor and after a long and tiresome search, found a thin-faced poisonous-looking parson in a dark room. Even his 'Come in' was forbidding, and his 'get out' quite devastating. I told him, who I was, and where I had come from. He scowled and snapped; "College opens in ten days; go find lodgings in the town and come back at the proper time". Again he scowled, and went back to his papers; I suspect a fluty sermon on the beatitudes. No friendly greeting, no hand held out, no word of welcome, and I'd grown up among kind people on the Coast.

My tutor, what a disgruntled unhappy bird! He does his best to be rude and scornful; a year in the foc'sle would do him a world of good. He has already informed me, that I know nothing, that I'm no good, and in the wrong pew; on the first score he's right, time will give the answer to the second. He sits with his feet in the hearth before a fire as sulky as his own disposition and when I come at his appointed time, gives me no greeting. Sometimes I stand in silence for five minutes, before he flings at me a scornful question and tells me to sit down. Is this man a teacher? He seems to be disappointed, even with his own greatness, as if he hadn't quite got on in the world as he thinks he should, or hadn't arrived at the correct social set. Those two rude birds, I dislike intensely, and I'll be astonished if they don't get their

tail feathers pulled some dark evening. Could by any chance, the manners of incoming Rhodes Scholars be any worse than theirs?

Then that laddie yonder in the grey suit and purple tie, name unknown, made some remarks just now that stung like a splash of brine in the eyes and to him I address my brief remaining remarks. The implication, that offended, was, that just as Australia had been founded by convicts so America has been settled by the scum of Europe. He may know that the scum is often the richest part of the liquid; the scum the cream is taken and cherished, while the skimmed milk is left for the pigs. I don't know what his ancestry was or is; his dad may be Baron Pumpernickle for aught I know, and he may be one of your makers of manners. I don't like in the least what he said, and in order that we may start more than fair, and that he may have every chance in rebuttal, I'll tell him what my old man is, and where I come from. My old man began in the foc'sle at sixteen as did his father before him and at twenty-four, he was master of the full-rigged clipper ship "Mary" in the China trade. No pull, no drag, no undue influence; he fought his way up and I'm right proud of him. My mother's people too were sailor-men mates and masters, Bluenose Masters.

I'm quite aware that I'm making a fool of myself, that I should not be here at all, but I'm in deep now and I might as well swim to the far shore. Now though I have little Latin and less Greek less than any of you, I know that when a man speaks to a motion, he should stick to the question in hand.

The motion reads; "Resolved that it would have been better if Columbus had never discovered America".

Outsiders never expect Englishmen to know any geography beyond that of this little island. It is necessary of course to know how to get up to London and to pass examinations on the travels of Paul, on Xenephon and Caesar's commentaries. Geography is a vulgar study, learned only in board-schools; for the cultured English, the world

outside of England is just a gigantic blob. However, there are some among you, who are not so hot at Latin and Greek, and who condescend to study or as you say, indicating the vulgarity of effort, to "read" History. This motion evidently was framed by no such enlightened modern, but by one who has spent his whole intellectual life among the ancient Greeks and Romans. For the fact is, that although Columbus made three voyages towards the western world, he never attained it, but only reached Tobago. The name of the real discoverer of America, I shall not reveal to you; it will be a good question for you to ask teacher to-morrow, and in case your learned tutor knows, you will be able to frame your motion correctly, when you wish to pull the leg of the next green horn.

When the motion is put, I shall vote "No" and perhaps these Yankee lads will vote with me. For I am truly glad, that Columbus got as far as Tobago, and that the great continents were ultimately reached, and I am very glad that I was born there. For while you have great wealth and great culture, we have got something that you haven't got. What is it? Well look about you when you grow up, and find out for yourselves. It has no name, it is something that you have to feel in your heart, for you can neither touch nor smell, nor see it. It is something like a combination of co-operation and fierce freedom and friendliness and comradeship; it is a spirit that gives food and a welcoming hand to the unknown weary stranger, and I suppose it can only arise in pioneer lands, where men are poor, where they clear the forrest and struggle against the sea, and strive together against the great forces of nature. What chance should I have had in this land of brittle convention, had I lived in a little grey cottage by the sea ? None; no I am glad I was born in America, land of hope and promise.

Since you have cast aspersions upon my land, let me tell you how you appear to me, after a three week's inspection. Already I am in such deep water, that I must either drown or reach the further bank.

In England, you have reduced snobbishness to a fine art. True, everyone is a snob in a small way; a high-line fisherman, on the coast, walks with a certain swagger and a head. But if his head becomes too big for his sou-wester, someone slaps it down over his eyes. But with you, snobbishness is a religion, a habit established by tradition. The big-shots set the pace, and the minnows swim after the whales, trying to pretend that they are mammals equipped with flippers and blow-holes.

Convention reigns supreme! Your top-notchers may be free and easy, but your middle class and petty gentry, are slavish imitators trimming their sails forever to the winds of their betters. The bowler hat may only be worn on Sunday, the Norfolk jacket on Monday; the handkerchief displayed incorrectly proclaims you an outsider, the old school tie must be tied in the regulation knot. You have forgotten that clothes are put on to keep you warm, and peaked caps to guard the eyes from the sun.

Everything must be correct on the surface; that is enough. On Sunday afternoons you sit in the Cathedral stalls in starched surplices smug as a group of young angels, no matter how drunk you have been, or where you have spent Saturday night. The outward show is eveything; it matters not how rotten the apple is at the core, or how much stinking bilge-water lies along the kelson.

Had you left us alone in our new world, we might have done better, and established a community of common interests, based on knowledge and science. No, you had to pursue us with feudalism, and a theology based on improbable axioms, and crowded with non sequiturs. There's some Latin for you. And the peoples of our new lands, have been split up into bitter sects, and tu'penny ha'penny

cathedrals have sprung up around which snobs have crystallized; people whose grandfathers arrived with a bag of potatoes and two bob, have already invented mythical ancestors; colleges have been established with the entrance condition of signing the thirty-nine articles. All the bullying of your ecclesiastical fanatics, has been foisted upon us.

Quite a long time ago, my people left their farm near Straban, because they were poor and refused to conform, crossed the Atlantic in some hooker, cleared the forests with great labour, made farms, and in rocky parts fished and built ships. I have never heard my old man rail against the English, because his grandfather had to leave Straban. He was wise enough to know, that peoples have always moved, when they and their beasts got hungry; that's why the Ayrans slogged into Europe; that's why you English got here and grew out of a swelter of odd races. There's no good in harbouring ancient feuds and grudges. But I have heard the old man rail against feudalism getting all power and wealth in the hands of the few, and against all priests and preachers, that set one class of people against another. We resent your intrusion of feudalism; we resent your theological nonsense, where a suave voice presents poetry and legend as fact and science.

You are indeed a people of contraditions; you support an archbishop in Lambeth palace, at seventy-five thousand dollars a year as a representative of the penniless itinerant peasant preacher Jesus, who banned heaven to the rich; upon the stinking slave trade you have cast the mantle of righteousness; you export missionaries to China to save the souls of the Chinese and destroy their bodies by forcing the opium trade upon them; your church condescends to the poor and is always in an issue of reform on the side of the rich; you prate of freedom and destroy the Boers, a free people. No wonder you are known in Europe as perfide Albion.

I will never be able to understand you any more than you will be able to understand me. You are a people apart; your Gods are trade, Money, Pleasure, Convention and the externals of Religion; no wonder, legend makes you sprung from the lost tribes of Israel. Yet in fairness I must admit that you are credited, with a sense of rough justice, and that you in this little Island, have produced the greatest poet of all time, and the greatest thinking mind of all time and these lovely colleges, and stately cathedrals that sincere beauty-loving minds must once have conceived. But your herd strives to tear down even your men of genius. I have never read, that Shakespeare or Newton were abused, but Napier, now hailed one of the great promoters of Mathematics, had his windows broken and was stoned on the streets as a wizard for inventing logarithms; John Wesley the greatest of your religious reformers, was hounded about the country-side, his sect given a name of derision; yet his portrait now hangs in the great dining-hall; Darwin, your parsons bedevilled through a life-time and buried him, at long last, in the Abbey. You are a race quite beyond understanding. Certainly I am glad that Columbus got to Tobago, and helped some of us escape this brittle confusion.

I, of course, shall do ill in your schools; how could it be otherwise. When you at twelve, knew all the irregular Greek and Latin verbs and could translate easy unseen's, I was sailing the seas. I was born at sea; the cabin was my home. Sometimes on sunny afternoons, in the Trades, the steersman would let me do a ten minute trick at the wheel, and hold the "Mary" steady. The great ship moved like a giant bird. Later I learned the compass, how to shoot a star, take the sun at noon and work out a rule-of-thumb calculation of position. But what does a knowledge of ships, boats, tides, winds, and herring nets, avail me here. Nothing, except that we all have to fall back for comfort on our own pride of what we know; nothing, except in those painful moments of silence with my tutor, scowling with his feet in the fender. Then, I

amuse myself, by seeing him in dungarees at the wheel a quartering sea, a quartering wind, puffing in gusty squalls, and my old man roaring about the quarter deck. How would his dyspeptic knowledge avail him then! He has never learned that knowledge is of many kinds.

I quite expect this speech to finish me here, before I have begun; I rose to a bait and was pricked by a barb of insult. You know the implication of his words. For me they do not state the fact, for if the emigrants were poor, they showed by the fact of their emigration that they were independent, courageous and stout-hearted. Long ago your ancestors came here bunted from many lands; once the ancestors of your noblest earl was a low-browed naked savage in a steaming jungle. The memory of man, is but a second in the long history of our race.

I am quite willing to go on alone, though I shall not like it, because I am not used to it. I shall always return insult with insult, and blow with blow. If any man in this college ever wishes to be friend or acquaintance, he must approach me with no condescension, for certainly I feel no inferiority to anyone here. When the motion is put I shall vote against it."

He sat down trembling. There was a moment of silence; then the undergraduate in the grey suit and purple tie, who had made the unpleasant and offensive remark, rose and said;

"My President, I wish to move, that the resolution before the house be amended to read; "It was a fortunate event for our English-speaking race when Columbus reached even as far as Tobago".

That was the way of the English; you could never excel them in discourtesy or courtesy. He could stand no more; he got up, cried 'Good-night' and rushed for the door. "Wait" they called "We are going to eat and drink" "No No" he shouted back; "I cannot eat or drink with you this night".

He ran across the close-cropped lawn, dodged Mercury,

stopped and turned at the corner of the Quad, where the carved staircase led up to the glory of the dining-hall. And his heart turned to water when he saw the slender embossed turrets against the glare of Carfox. "I have been a fool mother, a rash fool mother", and she replied "Yes a fool, laddie, but a stout-hearted fool. You didn't follow the formulas".

Next morning he held his head high, as he walked down the High alone on his way to the lecture room in the schools. By misadventure, he met both his tutor and the senior censor and looked quite through them and beyond, probably they never noticed.

Raleigh was reading, and his left hand trembled as he turned the page; Raleigh tall and thin, so modest and so great, that even the meanest must respect him, and many love him. Raleigh was reading and his voice lent music to the lovely words;

"These our actors, as I foretold you, were all spirits,
and are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a wrack rock behind. We are such stuff
as dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep".

It was bang in the middle of this grand passage, that he saw her and she saw him, that he became conscious of her and she conscious of him. He knew at once and she knew at once. Knew what? Who can say! There were three hundred listeners in that big lecture room, but only one vibration was flowing to him, a vibration just his wave length. She was wearing a broad-rimmed hat, a floppy hat with graceful curves, a floppy hat that held its shape, the finest kind of hat a beautiful woman can wear. No tricky modern shako for her, such as is devised by some demi-mondaine of Paris, to blight the whole race of women; she was too big and rangy for any such contraption. Only once more did he look in her direction that first morning, and when he did, she was looking straight at him, and their eyes held one another for a split second. What luck, an English girl who liked him, and he would never meet her, he thought, as he barged out with the crowd, and hurried up the High, his short gown tucked about his neck as a muffler.

Now these lectures became doubly interesting though he hardly listened to them at all; he could hardly wait for the day of their arrival. Always she was there, always their eyes met and held one another; she did not smile at him; nothing happened nothing could happen.

How can anyone describe the object of a growing love incited by the mystery of the unknown and the seeming impossibility of achievement. How insipid and colourless to say that she had blue-grey eyes, honey-coloured hair, a straight nose, a laughing mouth, two arms and two long legs. Everyone has hair, eyes, nose, mouth arms and legs, and it is indeed marvellous that nature, with so few factors can induce such a multitudinous variation of equations. But the apparent outside of shining beauty is almost nothing; it is only the tenuous wire that carries the field of the current, it is only the translucent revelation of a living force within; not the case but the works within give value to the fine watch; the inner glow is like the warm light that flows from lamp and fire place, when on a snowy night the curtains are still undrawn.

And this inner light creates an aura without, a certain shimmering vibration, a radiance, an uncertain brilliancy. She belonged to this earth and yet was not of this earth; she was not simply an agglomeration of cells,molecules,and atoms. The freshness of the bud was about her, and yet she was in full flower. He felt all this, he understood everything important about her, and yet he had never heard her speak nor knew her name. After his foolish speech at the club, it was comforting to have an unknown friend in a strange land. He knew that she thought of him, perhaps as he thought of her when Tom struck out his solemn midnight strokes.

An afternoon of winter sunshine on the river, the water black as ink but the banks and tow-path silvered with frost and ice. Perhaps, it was the glistening whiteness of the frost, that made the blackness of the water so intense. They had bumped Exeter, and were swinging rhythmically home light-hearted; one could almost whistle without reproof. He was rowing five, and his big hands almost covered the oar-handle; he had never revealed that this was child's play compared with tugging a double-dory in heading wind and sea. He had become tight-lipped about himself since that disgraceful evening. When they drew level with their barge, and ranged the starboard oars along the landing-stage to hold the shell steady, he glanced up. There she was with two other girls on the barge-roof. It was quite right for her to be there; many ladies were on the river that day, and the barges were gay with coloured coats and wind-tossed scarves.

But, he knew, he knew that she had not come to see the river, nor the boats, nor the racing, nor the gay crowd. She was on his barge, she had come to see him. His heart sang but he dared not look up again; only when they lifted the shell out, for her, he flexed his arm and shoulders to make great lumps of muscle stand out on them. He hoped she was looking but he dared not look up again, lest his face might reveal his secret to those about him. He entered the barge to

change, without even glancing in her direction.

Next morning, when he came out of schools,she was waiting, alone, on the pavement, by the great carved stone door-way. She came straight to him and held out her hand, he took it gladly in his big paw.

"It's silly waiting for some old dowager, who knows neither of us, to introduce us at a dance. It might never happen".

"That's right. I was afraid there'd never be a chance".

She told her name and he told his, his college and whence he came.

"I already know your name and college and home-land. Your speech has made you quite famous to some,infamous to others".

"Frightful, wasn't it?"

"Good for them; fortune favours the brave".

"An impudent colonial I suppose".

"That's the ticket. I'm direct myself, even bold when I feel that way".

"Else you would not have spoken to me".

"Right"

"I'd rather you'd spoken than picked up a million pounds. I'm in love with you; I think of you all the time.

They walked side by side a few steps in silence.

"I think, I'm in love with you too.

Isn't it queer?

"Queer enough like all the rest of life. I know everything important about you, and we've only passed twenty words. I suppose you're well born".

" Well enough".

"I'm well-born too, but I'm only my own kind of gentleman, but not the kind here. I've worked at manual things".

He held out his big calloused hands.

"Strong aren't they?"

"Not bad, but not scholar's hands".

"Fiddlesticks! Don't let your tutor unload any of his dyspeptic ideas on you. He's the local Sagmore, the witch doctor the medicine man of literature; he's the perfect snob who's never arrived. Look at Wright; he's the best here and he was in a coal-mine at fourteen. And Brandl of Berlin; he's the best in the world at the Beowulf, and he wears leather facings on his trousers and cuffs, and spits on the platform bang in the middle of a lecture when he feels that way. His father's a post-man in Thuringen. He's a grand man; I had him for two semesters". He laughed. "You're a comforting neighbour. I'm not exactly a peasant nor a coal-miner but in many ways, I'm pretty close to them".

" And a good thing too. I'm sick and tired of conventions; I know all the answers and I'm trying to forget them".

"You're just like I thought you'd be. You see inside things".

"So far sometimes that I'm a little afraid".

"But not for long".

"Oh no. Bull-dog breed stuff you know; cold baths and keep your back straight. Do you know you walk like a sailor".

"I am a kind of sailor-man. My brother and I were both born at sea. My old man was master of the 'Mary' then; he lost her, but he's got the 'Ethel' now.

"What are 'Mary' and 'Ethel' like?"

"Full-rigged clipper-ships. Old now".

"Women's names in the family?"

"Right".

"I'd like to look across the sea for days and days. I'm tired of trimmed hedges and neat enclosed fields".

"It's new to me and I like it; culture is being slowly imposed on me. I'm learning to yell "Scout" without blushing".

"Don't be silly sailor-man; don't make fun, and for God's sake don't ever be cultured. That's what I shall call you 'sailor-man'. How did you get the big hands and the scars on both wrists?"

"Hauling herring-nets and salt-water boils. My brother's a fisherman and he and mother, live in a little grey cottate by the sea".

"And I live shut in, shut in a big house in London. I'd like to stare over wide distances everyday".

"There's always the stars".

"London smoke hides them. I want wide rivers, forested hills and the sea".

"We can offer plenty of space and salt air. Do you want to call me sailor-man?"

"Yes, because you look like a 'Sailor-man'. I've heard 'sailor' but never that combination before. It's just right for you. A name should truly belong to a person. What's the sense in Jack or Jill? Anyone can be Jack or Jill, but I never knew an undergraduate before, that looked like a sailor-man, and you must have a distinctive name. Why you even put your feet down on the pavement as if it were rising up to meet you".

"Boats and ships did that".

"You're a real sailor-man; it's in your blood; I like reality".

"Any of your folk follow the sea?"

"Two brothers in the navy; full of proper conventions as nuts are full of meat. 'Yes sir, no sir, put the glass to the blind eye sir'. Awful snobs, but they're young".

"I expect they'd look down their noses at me".

"I expect they would and will".

"Will?"

"You'll have to meet them some day sailor-man. You don't seem to grasp that I'm signing on for a long voyage."
What an astonishing girl; she did not pretend; she did not lie; but went straight to the point like mother.

"Then, I must have a special name for you too. It's just come to me".

"What?"

"West Wind".

"Why?"

"It's the wind in our bay that brings the boats close-hauled both in and out from the fishing grounds; it's the warm wind; it's the fair weather wind; it's the wind that rolls out the fog and brings the men home; it's the wind we love on our coast".

"And if I'm ever sulky or cross, you can call me East Wind. Sou'west or North east for big gales".

"Good-bye sailor-man. I go north here".

"And I south".

"Did you see me on your barge?"

"You know I did".

"I was boldly setting my cap at you, and you hardly glanced my way".

"I didn't dare but I set my shoulder muscles at you. When do you fill my sails again West.Wind?"

"Every day of lectures, but not on the street. Come close by me, as we leave the schools; there's always a hurly-burly in the lower call; I'll speak a time and place, or stick a chit in your big hand".

"I'm still a stranger here".

"But you can ask directions sailor-man. God gave you a lovely tongue ".

"I'm not strong on asking where I am, and the course home".

"Never fear, I'll make the rendez-vous easy. I'll be just as anxious to meet as you. Restaurants were made to drink tea in, libraries to read in, churches to pray in, but they can all be put to better uses".

"Before you go; do you know you have a field like a charged cable. Do you know what a magnetic field is? It reaches clear across the lecture room to me".

"An aura. You have plenty yourself. Do you know sailor-man, I'm going to marry you some day ". And she was off.

What an astounding courtship, as swift as Miranda's. As a wife, she had been everything and more, than she promised as a girl, his pride upon the street, a busy laughing worker about the house, a true comrade and a marvellous lover who never hid her joy. She had born him six healthy children -- all scattered now -- and his West Wind blew no more.----------

IV

"The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces."

The morning was bright and clear after night showers; good growing weather. He looked about him, wondering what first to do; there was always the temptation to shun the difficult and unpleasant and attempt the easy and entertaining. Like children, every vegetable required special care and attention. Squash, must have plenty of space in which to roam, and their runners must forever be pointed in a desired direction; tomatoes must be staked up and tied, since the strength of their stalks was inadequate to their weight of fruit. Some bad engineering on somebody's part there. Perhaps people in cities thought, that a gardener simply dropped a seed in May, and gathered the perfect crop in September.

His telephone peas had grown high, and many delicate tendrils were swaying about in the morning breeze asking, searching, for support in their climb towards the blue. He disliked the job of sticking peas, but it must be done and at once. The easiest method, was to put in rows of stakes and staple chicken-wire to them. But last year, Jason the oracle inspecting his browned and yellowed pea rows, had said; "When a child puts his hands on the stove, he is burnt". That took a lot of interpreting, but eventually meant; 'In midsummer heat, the wire gets hot and scorches the clutching tendrils'. He could hardly believe that true, for after all, Jason had no chicken-wire rows, and it could be with him but theory or conjecture. He would adopt the scientific method of experimentation, and have two rows chicken-wired, and two rows brushed.

He got out his battered wheel-barrow, fetched an axe, and trundled off down the shade-flecked wood-road, that led to the

little clearing of sunshine, where Jason had cut his winter's wood. Two partridges were sunning themselves in the clearing and as it was June, they did not bother to fly.

There were plenty of brush piles, but it was tedious disentangling each stick, sharpening each on a stump. Birch sticks were the best - beech was too crooked and each had to be straight and about four feet long. At last the labour was completed, and he lashed the mountainous pile upon his barrow.

As he stuck his peas, alternate sticks on either side of the rows, that met on top and mutually supported each other, he was glad that he had planted his garden north and south. Now the sun could shine along his rows. It took three hours to thrust in the sticks, tack up the chicken-wire, and tear out the clumps of throttling chick-weed, that loved the shade and company of peas best of all.

He was tired, when he had finished this job, but the pole-beans were crying out to be hoed, and he answered their call, reflecting on the mystery of pole-beans as he hoed. For pole-beans always twined about their lofty poles in the same direction, always anti-clock-wise. He had watched them for years and years, always the same twist, always anti-clock-wise, and he had hoped that some day, he would find an original pole-bean, a sport, who breaking away from family tradition, would climb sky-ward clock-wise. But no, he had never found one; they were as conservative as rich liberals or as labour members made peers. If he started a young tendril by twisting it clock-wise, it either withered and died, or more often turned back on itself and climbed as the others. It was as impossible to twist a pole-bean as it was impossible to twist the essential nature of a child, without marring it. The whole ultimate nature of the plant was confined in the seed, and seeds took a long time to alter; sometimes of course an interchange of pollen between close-by related plants, produced unexpected sports. Pole-bean seeds produced

pole-beans, and never by any chance tomatoes, peas, or cauliflower. All he could do, by intense cultivation and scientific fertilizing, all the sun and rain could do, was to increase the strength of stalk and health of leaf. Their essential nature, could not be changed except in long ages of adaptation.

Children were very like that; we could wash and feed and clothe them, but their essential nature was all settled in the egg, from which they sprang. It was wicked, to tell them that they might become presidents and premiers, if they strove hard enough, for each had definite limits due to his muscular and nervous co-ordination, and the number quality and arrangement, of his brain cells. If the living essence in their seed, bade them climb anti-clock-wise, anti-clock-wise, they had to grow.

He was very tired and hoed slower and slower, and as usual when his body tired, his mind raced along in fantasy, as if he had pulled out too much throttle.

Vegetables seemed to fall into classes as did people in organized societies; even in the garden it was impossible to escape an ingrained habit of snobbishness. The root-crops were the common people, but the beets and carrots a lick above the potatoes and turnips; the cabbages were fat middle-aged women, practical nurses, Mrs. Gamp's, inclined to be garrulous and fond of gossip; the corn, with its dignity of broad leaves, represented the professional classes, doctors, lawyers, teachers; and the squash, that intruded and ran over everything, and produced huge elliptical dividends, represented the men of big business. The squash, too, were like soldiers, soldiers of some realistic barbaric yet scientific tribe, that over-rode everybody and destroyed as they advanced. They were not tactful, these squash, quite lacking in consideration of others.

But the aristocrats, the elect of the garden, were the gentle herbs; Anise, Basil, Caraway, Coriander, Dill, Sweet Marjoram, Mint, Sage, Thyme and Summer-Savory. These lovely names must have been

chosen by poets, and were certainly more pleasant to tongue and ear than 'turnip'.

On entering the garden of a morning, he could never resist running his open hand along the tops of the rows of Thyme and Summer-Savoury, and taking deep breaths of the fragrance that floated up from them, and flooded all the garden. Such fragrance he supposed, must come from millions of tiny particles, flushed into the air by the pressure of his hand.

Now he was thoroughly tired, and as he sat down by his spruce to rest, smoke, and dream of other days, he reflected that this morning he had been a builder of frail tents of birch boughs, to shelter and support his growing peas ----------

Again he drove his shovel deep into the ground, and took out the first heaping shovel-full of sod and sandy soil. The soil was all sand with no rocks; it was easy to dig. There before him lay the oblong, he had staked out with a white rope, its front fair and parallel with the great river; there lay the oblong within which he must dig and dig. And he was digging no garden, but the cellar for his own house, his first very own house.

Lectures were through by one, and by two he was always there, digging digging as long as light lasted. Early September already, a promise of Autumn in the air, and before November was out, he must be installed, a roof over his head, doors and windows fitted; a kitchen stove, a box for a chair, a book-case, a rough table, and he could cook and live by himself.

Not only the fullness of joy in his heart, the exhiliration of expectancy, and the approach of winter, pushed him on; he could no longer endure Mrs. Chilliwick's boarding-house, and the

company of Geolan, who with his biting Irish satire, pricked every bubble of his idealism. He knew they were bubbles, but such lovely bubbles, and Geolan exploded them into pitiful atoms; there was no human action, for which he could not find a foul motive. Intellectuals could be perverts after all.

Every afternoon, he dug and dug publicly, till darkness settled down. People laughed at him of course, but sometimes friendly undergraduates came and gave him a lift. First, he dug trenches just inside the white ropes, throwing the sand well back; these completed he dug towards the centre. As he got deeper, the sand had to be shifted twice, once to the level of the ground, and then thrown back along the land to make room for more. He was so impatient in those days; so anxious for good things to happen quickly. But the sand was dull inert stuff, that had no interest in his affairs; it had lain there comfortably for a couple of million years, and there it was quite content to stay. It shrugged yellow indifferent shoulders at him, and seemed to glory in his down-dropping sweat.

To help himself along, he used to calculate; he could certainly throw out ten shovel-fuls a minute; that's six hundred shovel-fuls an hour, and three thousand shovel-fuls in an afternoon. If each shovel-ful weighed four pounds, then he was getting out twelve thousand pounds or six tons each day. He seemed to remember, that about two and a half-tons of sand went to a cubic yard; about two and a half-cubic yards a day. Then he made a swift calculation of the cubic contents of his still hypothetical cellar. It could be dug in a week; but of course it couldn't, for some afternoon it poured rain, when even he had not the face to work in the open. Thinking and calculating helped him to sublimate his impatience, as long as he kept the shovel going.

To begin with, he had only as tools, two shovels, a pick-axe a wheel-barrow and three pieces of plank, and the pick-

axe he hardly used at all, though the deeper layers of sand were pretty solid. As he got deeper, he made a ramp on the forward side and with his barrow, wheeled out the sand from the centre. Seven feet there must be, from cellar floor to bottom of floor-joist; he was six foot two himself, and he knew, there was nothing meaner, nothing more provocative of strange and original profanity, than low hanging cellar joists.

It was in fact, twelve days before the cellar was completely dug and battened up with rough boards; now he had to begin the long deep trench, to water main and sewer. Here along the river, the frost went deep, and he had to go down a good six feet. Foley, a good natured Irishman, the town engineer, came to help and advise him; a friendly soul was Foley, who did not laugh at him.

Two masons had to be hired, to help with drains, to lay the cellar floor, and pour the cement walls. There was plenty of good sand around, and once the frames were made of rough boards, the work went quickly, the cement flowed in by barrow loads and established its own level.

He had saved a little through that summer, but his stipend was only a hundred dollars a month, and forty of this he had to thrust monthly, for bed and board into Chilliwick's hand. However it was astonishing, how far the remaining sixty stretched, in those far off days, and how much could be accomplished if he laboured himself. For a couple of weeks, two skilled carpenters gave him two hours a night after supper, helped him lay his sills level, and square - five, three, and four, was their great angle-board, there was some sense in geometry after all - spike down floor joists, raise studding in accordance with his plan for doors and windows. Plates were nailed down and rafters fitted. When they left him he was well away.

Now the chimney must be made, just a little off centre

in the middle, a chimney with two flues, that would serve both kitchen and sitting-room. Masons came, but before their arrival, he spent two whole days in wheeling up from the river banks, flat rocks to make in his cellar, a pier to carry his chimney. And for plain bricks and fire bricks he had to go in debt. As the masons, with painful deliberation and much squinting at plumb-lines, laid brick upon brick, he boarded in. They were slow as death, and wasted time in talking and smoking, but they did a lovely job on chimney and fire-place. They were stoutish men, who put their feet down slowly, tapped their trowels with deliberate independence, and they could not be hurried. He put up with them, because they knew their jobs so well, because they had a touch of artistry and were, he imagined, a little like the craftsmen who built the cathedrals.

Boarding in, was a joy, because it went so fast; he could cut square and he had helped build boats; love taught him to make cunning close-fitting joints.

First, in defiance of all orthodoxy, he boarded in the roof, so that his masons could set a good flushing of sheet lead about the chimney. He knew the importance of that. Boarding-in went fast, and he gave a pat to each white spruce board that covered twenty square feet of his roof. His roof finished, he went at the walls in a fury of enthusiasm; his two carpenters came again, fitted his doors and windows, and helped him lay his first floor; now the house could almost be lived in.

But he was getting very much in debt, and one day Sharpe, the bank manager announced to him; "I'm sorry to tell you your bank account is over-drawn". That was a disgrace in those days. "Sorry", he mumbled "I'll fix it up someway".

He went to the office of a swarthy man and asked for a mortgage on his property; it was also in those days a disgrace to carry a mortgage. He would never forget that trembling conversation.

"How much do you think your property is worth?"

"Four thousand" with simulated boldness.

"It might bring fifteen hundred".

"I paid five hundred for the land. Can I borrow a thousand dollars on it?"

"If you're willing to pay eight per cent".

"That's eighty dollars a year".

"Right".

"And I can get the thousand dollars now?"

"Yes, I'll take the mortgage". People smiled at him as if he were a madman, but trusted him.

"And I can start paying off whenever I'm ready."

"Again the swarthy man smiled and said "Yes". He had dealt with many eager young mortgagers before, who had dreamt of paying off early and been enslaved for life. He boosted his account in Sharpe's bank; the mortgage was a temporary millstone about his neck, but he was singularly happy as he began to nail on the shingles.

During all this busy period, he had been lecturing on Chaucer, on Chaucer a mediaeval poet, or almost mediaeval, a poet with a great and merry heart. He was glad it was Chaucer and not one of the moderns, for Chaucer, remote in time, seemed to understand and even back him up. He could hardly have endured Wordsworth; he was building his immortal soul and had no time to think about it. Chaucer with his great store of wordly widsom and his undying belief in man, in an age that was corrupt was the poet for him; he was indeed second only to the great William.

How intensely, how badly, how ineffectively, he had lectured to those callow boys and girls, during his period of frantic labour. Often his mind was far away. Somehow upon his brain cells, had been imprinted a vivid picture; rows of white faces before him, himself (how could he in the picture) on a platform lecture stand before him, in a baggy gown, lecturing furiously, and shooting Miss Langland out of the room for some minor inattention. How unjust! How after he had blushed over those early years of furious dogmatic teaching, when fury was only employed to cover his own inadequacy. He was afraid and made them afraid; he was at his worst in the class-room, and knew not how to draw them to him. Had he not been varsity footballer and boxer, they might have revolted. Chaucer that great spirit, tried to bridge the gap, but even Chaucer was not quite strong enough for that.

At any rate the fury of his teaching had printed indellibly upon his memory cells some lovely passages. Had he so impressed his hearers.?

' A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also,
That un-to logik hadde long y-go,
As lene was his hors as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake;
But loked holwe, and there-to soberly.
Ful thredbar was his overest courtepy;

For he had geten him yet no benefice,
Ne was so worldly for to have office.
For him, was levere have at his beddes heed
Twenty bokes, clad in blak or reed
Of Aristotle and his philosophye,
Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautrye.
But al be that he was a philosophre,
Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre;
But al that he might of his frendes hente,
On bokes and on lerninge he it spente,
And bisily gan for the soules preye
Of hem that yaf him wher-with to scoleye
Of studie took he most cure and most hede.
Noght O word spak he more than was nede,
And that was seyd in forme and reverence,
And short and quik, and ful of hy sentence.
Sowninge in moral vertu was his speche,
And gladly would he lerne, and gladly teche.

He snapped the chalkline; he drove the nails home with a single blow; still the shingling went slowly; two could have done it so much faster than one. And one day old Tom arrived; they had pigged it together for a fortnight and laughed together and talked of the Ardmore and other days. Tom was a married man, with three kids, living with mother, for the old man, in steam now, was still roaring about the seas of the world.

"Have you picked a good boat/for the long cruise young'un?"

"Thirty five knots, Diesel engine and lines like the Mary".

That helped a lot, for Tom pounded away, while he was at the college in the mornings. They laid two coatings of tarred paper beneath the shingles, and built and roofed a wood-shed with the sides still unshingled. Country bred, they knew the necessity of a good cellar and a storage place to dry wood. The house was ready for rough occupancy by mid-November, just as the first snow began to sift down, and Tom went home to report progress to mother.

The house was simple in plan; a New England cottage, with a porch in front and rear, such as he had seen as a boy in Barrington. No painting could be done till spring, but then dazzling white it should be with green roof, green doors and window shades and green shutters. Within there were but two rooms down stairs; the big living room in front, facing the river, and a big kitchen in the rear with a dining place in the sunny southern end. The big chimney in the centre dominated all, and the well proportioned fire place of brown bricks was a perfect focus, for the oblong sitting room.

Upstairs there were three rooms, a big bed-room across the whole southern end, a bath and dressing room, and a store and trunk room; the stairs, came up from the kitchen on the northern end. Four big closets, he made up-stairs, for he remembered that women love closets and lockers.

The bath-tub, toilet and kitchen sink had cost him a pretty penny, for these he had had of the very best quality, and the plumber, forever after, tipped his cap to him. He bought the best kitchen stove, first and most important article of household furniture, that could be bought in those parts. A furnace was beyond his reach, but in a house as compactly built as his, a hard-coal fire at night would heat the whole. For the bed-room upstairs, he installed an old fashioned Franklyn of good heavy cast iron.

He hoped that she would be worm enough; some winters the mercury touched thirty below; but they were tough those English girls, and many a time he had seen them sit calmly through a damp draughty lecture, when his teeth were almost chattering.

Now his house was ready for rough occupancy, now he was ready to move in, now he could say good-bye for ever to Geolan and Chilliwick. He made himself a bed of chicken wire, on a rough frame setting it close beside the kitchen stove; made as well, three rough book-cases and a rough table to work on; boxes served as chairs; these were but temporary measures to tide him through the winter. Now he could live on twenty dollars a month, and each month put eighty into his house. He bought a light mattress, four good blankets, some cheap dishes, frying pan, skillets, a dish-pan, clothes for washing and drying, a tea-pot, a coffee pot, a big knife, a whet-stone, two tin plates, a broom, a mop, a buck-saw and another heavy axe. Before this, he had gradually acquired all the necessary carpenter's tools for both coarse and fine work.

Never would he forget his first grocery purchase or the shamefaced way he went about it. So intense had been his excitement, that after the passage of many years he could remember every item; sugar, butter, bacon, eggs, oranges, oatmeal, tea, coffee, bread, sardines, bully beef, salt cod fish, milk and a package of Aunt Jemimia's buck-wheat flour.

He came down Main Street on a windy mid-afternoon, met some grinning undergraduates, and several members of the social set, who had promoted their ancestors from lance-corporals to full colonels and even generals. They looked down their noses at him and sniffed; this was no proper conduct for a teacher in the college. He was hardly chagrinned at all, and in the hope that they might look back, he stuck the broom he had under his arm over his shoulder, slung a loaded basket thereon, and lengthened his loping stride to that of a real hobo.

November twenty-ninth, with the first snows of winter swirling, was the great day; Tom and he had pigged it therein for a fortnight, but now he moved into his own house and began housekeeping officially. He was happy; he had got a letter that day, and he sat on his own box by his own kitchen-stove, and read it thrice through.

He had worked hard and went to bed early on his chicken-wire cot, a paraffin lamp glowed on the table; he read a little of Don Quixote, and watched the fire glow in his own grate. That night a great roaring wind storm blew up from the north east, with a shrieking, howling and jangling of chains, that made the tall elms along the river bank, creak and groan, and tore off some of their great limbs. His snug happiness increased, in direct proportion to the fury of the storm, accentuating his ownership possession and primitive comfort. Next morning, when he looked out, there was ruffled whiteness everywhere; but that would pass, it was not yet time for the big snows.

What a heavenly time now, became Friday at two-thirty, when, with all his papers marked, he could cram books and all the paraphernalia of teaching into his battered desk, and slam down the cover, secure in the knowledge, that he had the whole of two and a half days to himself to build and build and build.

During the winter, a skilled carpenter helped him lay throughout his house, floor of narrow strips of yellow birch. After these were down, and scrapped and polished, he went about his house, when alone, in stockinged feet. Thick layers of paper were between the two floors, and around the entire wall of the living room, he had built a high shelf of birch, with spaces below for books and lockers. That was perhaps a memory of a ship's cabin. He stuffed shavings between the studdings as insulation against the cold of winter, and overlaid these with up and down panelling of planned matched yellow boards of spruce, in which there were plenty of knots. He had always enjoyed the rich brown colour of polished knots. This panelling had been his heart's great desire; he had no great liking for paint or paper, for wood was beautiful in its varied grain, and should only be protected by paint, against wind and weather. As yet, he had neither furniture nor callers, but the house as a house was almost complete in itself.

His fire-place, built of brick reddish-brown, faced and lined with straw-coloured fire brick, pleased him. Both form and colour were good, but he needed a long oblong picture to hang above the brick mantle. And strange to say, his one possession of great price, bought at the cost of many short commons, was just what he wanted for this space above the mantle.

He had been wandering about London, one misty day, and had spied it in an art dealer's window. The picture seemed to illuminate all the drab dullness of window and street. It was the picture of a ship entering harbour after a long voyage, a weary ship coming home; no smart well painted ship but a homing tired ship; her royals and t'gallants clewed up and slatting in the bunt-lines, while tiny dark figures of sailors darted from yard to yard, swaying on the foot-ropes, as they tied down the gaskets.

He went away, walked around the block, returned, looked

again, entered the shop and shyly asked the price. It was far beyond what he could afford. He went away but returned next day. The picture seemed more wonderful than ever; spots of light from the west were catching and glinting on yard, spar, and rail; the harbour hills were almost black, but a spot of yellow light glowed from one fisher's house and the sea was dark and she had just enough way to make a ripple and hold a tiny bone in her teeth. She was battered, her canvas was thin and torn, she was coming home to rest and refit; tired with Sydney, Rangoon and Valparaiso she was coming home to the harbour where upon the stocks she had grown. It was so like the Mary coming home, that he could fancy mother and himself on the poop-deck and the old man striding firecely to and fro, shouting orders to bos'n and mates and glaring at the man at the wheel.

Again he entered the shop, and figetted about, pretending to look at prints in which he had no interest.

"You still like that picture"?

"More than anything; I've ever seen. It's like my old man bringing the Mary home".

The sharp-faced clerk in his smart morning coat, looked at him sharply and said; "Excuse me a minute". After a little a strange frowsy old man came from the back shop; frowsy indeed he was, with rumpled coat and tousled dusty hair; the antithesis of his smart clerk, in fact was almost a duplicate of the old Don called at Oxford the British Workman; he felt sure that if he could see behind the counter, he would find similar great holes in the heels of his stockings.

"You like the picture laddie?"

"Very much".

"And you're a scholar over here; perhaps a Rhodes Scholar".

"Yes but how could you know".

"I have eyes; I look about me".

"A poor scholar in two senses".

"And your people followed the sea?"

"For three generations and built and sailed ships like that".

"Then you shall have it at a lower price".

"I can pay ten pounds down".

"And the rest as you can".

"And you will keep the picture for me".

"No, no you shall take it with you".

"But you don't know me".

"I've seen you. My forebears too followed the sea; I've seen many men; I too should have followed the sea; now behold me a dusty old man marooned in this dusty shop.

That was how he acquired his first treasure. Now, with great care he hung it low over the mantle-piece; he built a tiny fire in the big fire place and stepped back to look at it, against its shining background of light yellowed spruce. It was perfect; it added a glory and dignity to that empty room; now indeed this was home.

In mid-winter, he had a country-man haul him five cords of long hardwood sticks and fir stubs. These he cut up into appropriate lengths for stove and fireplace, split them, dried them in March winds and piled his wood-shed full. The remainder he stowed in the cellar. It was real work splitting some of the knotty hard-wood, but it was a joy to split the fir, since in the frosty air, it slabbed off with each crack of the axe.

In May, it was time to dig gardens behind the wood-shed and to rake and level ground. Between the two tiny gardens, he left a space for a garage; perhaps he might own an ancient Ford one day. Now if he needed a fourth building, his back yard would be a little, enclosed, quadrangle and of course it must be paved with flag-stones.

From the river bank he fetched barrow load after barrow load of silt and rotting leaves, to dig into his prospective gardens. The soil was pure sand, an old river bed or lake bottom, and it would suck up much manure. He sighed for lobster shells and fish guts, that stank to heaven, but grew timothy four feet high for the fishermen. On his levelled lawns he scattered plenty of barnyard and patent fertilizer, and broadcast lawn-grass and timothy. It was not long before he had to buy a lawn mower.

This done, he borrowed a ramshackle boat - 'Can you row a boat'? he remembered the old freshwater beachcomber had asked him - and went up river to a slate ledge he had seen. He plied his crowbar and in three afternoons, he brought back - only one streak of the old boat clear - enough flagstones to flag the pathsfrom street to his front door, paths about the house,beneath the drip of the eaves, and the little quadrangle of his backyard. That had been a hard but soul-satisfying job.

It was only a year later, that the West Wind had told him, what that other building space was for.

"Do you know sailor-man it's a lovely house, a jewel of a house, but there's one funny thing about it".

"Funny, what's funny about it?"

"You won't be hurt sailor-man; you've laboured so hard to make it".

"Shoot your fatal criticism".

"There's no place for kids".

His jaw dropped; he had only planned for West Wind and himself; he had made no rooms for children.

"And we're going to have lots and lots of them you know".

"We'll be stepping on them".

"Unless we lock them all in the box-room".

They had solved the problem by completing the fourth

side of their backyard quadrangle with the Children's House to which each child was promoted on reaching an age of semi-discretion. Upstairs there were eight tiny cubicles - 'we must have room to expand' said West Wind, and he could still see the names stencilled in bold black letters upon each door.

Mary

Martha

John (Jackie)

Peter

David

Michael

"No fancy names for us" West Wind had decreed. "England is crawling with Barbaras, Phyllis's, Marjorie's and Lalage's, that cumber the earth. Ours shall have plain honest names, even if they mean nothing". Each cubicle had had six books, a tiny bed, a locker a chest of drawers, a hooked mat. At the end of the upstairs corridor was a big bathroom, that was always in a mess. Downstairs was just one big play-room, made as child-proof as it could be made. There they pounded, built, cut out pictures, quarrelled, fought, laughed, and invited in their contemporary friends to their heart's content. There was an ancient piano there and they stuck pictures about the walls in accordance with their fancies. In the locked cellar beneath was a tiny oil furnace. How he would like to see that battered room again.

Was it still there, he wondered; West Wind had stencilled over the door-way; "How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world that has such people in it!" For they could never forget "The Tempest"; it was while Raleigh was flinging lovely word vibrations into the air, that their eyes had first met.

Six healthy children she had born him in nine years, causing head-shakes to many withering virgins, and in spite of tumbling in all possible holes, swinging from elm branches, falling

in the river from jerry-made rafts, they had all survived and grown to splendid maturity. Of course there had been, broken arms, bruises, diphtheria and all the ills that children meet. But they had survived them.

There had been few rules, only two that he could remember; the play-room must be tidied and play-things put in the respective owner's locker each night, and they must be washed up before coming in to tea. What a racket there had been in that play-hall some days; what music to his ears. David at seven had won his badge, as the first monitor. An experiment in a child's democracy; not one hundred percent perfect of course; there had been dozens of little heart burnings and minor catastrophes, but the children had liked it and slept in their tiny cubicles till they were grown; in fact there was no other place for them to sleep.

In June, he completed shingling his wood-shed and painted both house and shed white, trimming them with the green of nasturtium leaves. Beneath the front windows, he set green window boxes and planted them late with nastiriumns, that would flower in September. Along his front flagged walk he made narrow beds and filled them with late blooming petunias and black-eyed Susans. He set out clumps of white and purple lilacs, bridal wreath, laburnum, Japanese quince and forsythia. He mowed his lawn and prayed for warm intermittent rain, while he was away. Like God at the time of creation, he looked upon his work and found it good. He could not afford to buy a big rug for the living room, but a friendly woman, supposedly of bad character but great hearted, gave him a useful tip. You never could tell about life. Sometimes the virtuous were very mean, often the unvirtuous generous. He collected old carpets, and in a near-by city had them woven into a multi-coloured rug, that almost covered the floor and did very well. Mother sent him the walnut bed-room suite, carved with flowers and dragons, they had brought from Shanghai, and a walnut table and two rocking chairs for

the big living room. Mother always knew. Mother who had come for the arrival of each baby, had got on like hot cakes with West Wind; they were both aristocrats in their own ways, and they laughed together from morning to night, he suspected about him. Mother never revealed that she was proud that he was lecturing in the college. She still spoke as if she were still teaching him Latin and Algebra in the kitchen.

He raked, weeded, watered, manured, trimmed, and looked upon his castle with delight. Like Troy it had arisen to music, to the music of his own singing heart.

In August he was ready to depart. He still carried the thousand dollar mortgage, but the interest was paid and he had four hundred and twenty-five dollars in the bank. Wealth!

He must bring West Wind home in style, so he travelled over in the steerage and in dungarees, and played forty-fives with cattle hoboes. He never told; it is fun to have a few ultimate secrets; he was careful that no one knew the name of his boat nor the time of his arrival; he must not be met at the pier. [New paragraph] It had been cold on the train, and after she had looked the house over - it did not take long - they sat before the hearth in their two chairs. Old Morse had kept the lawn trim and done them well with a rousing fire in the hearth, against their return.

"Not much like Lancaster Gate".

"But so much nicer and I can watch the big river everyday".

"Do you really think it's nicer?"

"A thousand times nicer; if anything can be perfect, this is it".

"I'm a little in debt, but it won't take long to pay".

"I have to confess something sailor-man".

"A previous lover?"

"No, I haven't had one and I shouldn't tell if I'd had. No something quite different".

"Out with the worst".

"I've seven hundred a year of my own".

"Pounds or dollars?"

"Pounds".

"Then we're millionaires. Why didn't you tell me?"

"Why, you silly sailor-man with your herring-net pride, I was afraid if I told you, you wouldn't marry me".

That morning, he woke stiff and tired and lay late in bed; it didn't matter when he got up, now that he was alone; only he wished someone would bring him a steaming cup of coffee, and that he could hear a merry laugh. Nothing lasts forever. In lieu of coffee, he lay there idly smoking, and watching the sun gild and dapple the young maple that grew near the south window. Then to dull his conscience, which kept saying; "Get up, the sun is shining, Get up and make the fire, boil the coffee, cook the porridge; Get up this is another day of life, just like any other day" - to still this restless driving conscience, he idly picked up a magazine and began to read. To have formed the habit of work in early life is both a blessing and a curse; it becomes almost impossible to rest quietly and enjoy leisure.

The article, in this paste-pot and scissors magazine, was on Insects, and it saddened him. The burden of the writer's song was, that insects had been upon the earth long before man, that they were older and perhaps wiser than man in their materialistic realism, that they would ultimately destroy man hampered by his idealism, survive him and rule the world again. It was so easy to be a pessimist, to foresee a hopeless outcome to everything; he knew that the sun might be burning out to join the dull comradeship of dead stars trundling about the universe, and one had only to glance at the masses of igneous rocks along the lake shore, to learn that the earth had cooled and cooled. But the calamity of ultimate cooling, was perhaps a hundred million years hence, and perhaps even then, the surviving human race, might meet its end with frigid dignity. Forever, materialism battled with idealism; one dragged us towards a murky pit, the other gave us flashes of a heavenly beauty. But to be destroyed by insects, that indeed would be a frightful finale. The coach-roach, surprised by a click of light, he had always regarded as an unfriendly, malicious evil insect, and ants that multiplied by millions, proudly indifferent to men, were fierce soldiers. They pillaged other ant tribes without mercy and destroyed

all before them; they were undoubtedly fatalistic materialists singularly like the yellow dwarfish Japanese.

He felt better in his mind after getting some oatmeal and hot coffee under his belt, and resolved to get as quickly as possible to his garden, since the day was so warm and radiant. First, however, he must drive to the village for butter, eggs, bread and gasoline. He got out his open car, put back the hood, and opened the wind-shield to the full. On such a day, one should miss no breath of air. He arrived, scanned the shelves for canned salmon and bully beef, but drew a blank.

On the way home, something occurred, that distressed him; he ran into a great flight of fresh-hatched flying ants. The air became opaque, the sun almost shut out; for a quarter of a mile they dashed themselves into yellow blobs against his wind-shield, hurled themselves to death against the seat and slithered by thousands in the bulging hood. A few crawled down his neck and back, but they were not spiteful; they did not bite, simply crawled and tickled. Often before he had observed them in their ephemeral life of a day or two, but never before in such prolonged swarms. They were rather terrifying; perhaps the pessimistic biologist had been right.

Arrived home, he swept two or three quarts of them from his car, revived the flagging kitchen fire, and dumped them into the blaze. What a wholesale slaughter! What sizzling and crackling! He had played the malignant deity to a whole tribe. Had one, he wondered, escaped to set down a report of the great holocaust in flying-ant history?

It had evidently been a night of hatching and emigration, in the insect world, for when he strolled towards his sun-lit garden and passed the flat rock where he often sat and speculated on what he ought to do, he saw that the Colorado beetle, the potato bug, long since divorced from Colorado, had descended upon him. In the night

They dropped from the blue, and swarmed up out of the earth, and there were hundreds and hundreds of them on his potatoes; the males busy in the act of love, and the disengaged females busy laying their patches of pink eggs upon the leaves' lower side. What councils, what parliaments, in the potato-bug world overnight, what rousing orators must have spoken before they embarked on this invasion, convinced of the righteousness of their crusade and the certainty of victory.

He was a man, and he must fight them back and play his part in destroying insects, but even as he turned to collect water, watering-can and arsenate of lead, he could not help pausing a moment to admire the technique of these pests; it was no mean feat to lay eggs upside down, and stick them firly to the under-side of a slippery leaf.

Up and down the rows he went, waggling the watering-can to and fro, so that some of the poison fell on every leaf. Now the plants glistened with grey and white patches in the morning sun; the Borgias had done their work. Presently the male lovers grew careless in their loving, rolled over on their sides, and began to write lyrics about it before they died, while the fruitful pregnant females, busy in the eternal process of multiplication, lost their ambition, relaxed their hold, and dropped languidly from green leaf to brown earth. Survival was only possible through killing. He had burned one tribe and poisoned another and to the black mark acquired in flying-ant history, another, perhaps, had been added by the official historian of the potato bug. He had no sympathy with flying-ants but a bit of admiration for potato-bugs, always so industrious so solemn so pompous; when one looked at them under a magnifying glass, [illegible] they were beautiful in symetrical design and rich in colour.

He might as well complete his round of murder and visit the squash-beds. He lifted the shingles that he had cunningly laid to provide a night's shelter for the squash-bugs. They did not enjoy the chill of night. He was too late; all his boarders were abroad save

a few indolent fellows to whom their M.O. had perhaps given "'medicine and light duty.' These, he also slew, destroying root and branch. He knew where the early risers would be, and he sifted wood-ashes, sulphur and arsenate of lead upon the broad squash leaves and long succulent stems. The squash bugs loved to attack the stems that carried life to the fruit, and the cutting of these stems was like destroying the Army Service Corps to the troops in the line.

In the midst of his dusting, he discovered that the sly deer had visited the garden in the night and gouged great bites from four young squashes; there were the marks of their buck-teeth there the print of their slender feet. No poison could hold them back; nothing but more wire.

Thirty seven green fat slugs, he found on the under-side of cabbage and cauliflower plants. The butterfly and silver moth had been busy while he was sleeping. These too he reduced, between thumb and finger, to sudden death.

It was long past noon now; no weeding, no hoeing had been done, but it was high time for rest and smoke.

He wondered if Wordsworth had ever tended a garden and if on such a morning as this, he could have sentimentalized the spotted butterfly, the glistening moth, the graceful deer. Chaucer and Shakespeare could have maintained gardens, but hardly Wordsworth or Coleridge. For gardening, like life in the world of men was war to the knife; war against wind and rain and too much sun, war against portulaca, lamb's tails, couch grass (witch grass Jason called it most appropriately), pig-weed, wild-mustard, morning glory, chick-weed, against aphis, and potato-bug, against blight, squash bug, slugs, cutworm, wire-worm and corn-borer, war against intruding deer and stripped racoons that slit open the young ears of corn.

Jah, the tribal God of Israel so explicit in his orders of the day, in regard to the annihilation of unfortunate Amalekites,

would have been pleased with his morning's work. In the world of nature, one had to destroy both jungle and beast, or in turn be choked and over-run. Perhaps it had always to be so in the world of men, after all part of nature; so the sour-mugged cynics said. Whatever was true, about the world of men, it certainly took war to the knife to maintain a garden; some forms must die, in order that others might persist and live ---------

Tramp, tramp, tramp, through little French villages at night, tramp, tramp, tramp on the way to Amiens and Victory; tramp, tramp, tramp, and the men singing Donald from Bras d'or; what a never-to-be-forgotten rhythm, what a melody! Someone in a darkened door-way group catching the phrase 'bras d'or', flung questions to them on the night air; 'Who are you, whither do you go'? But no answer was tossed back, for they were marching by night, hiding in wooded places by day, and none in a world, full of informers, must know their name, their destination, nor their very existence.

Tramp, tramp, tramp; they were through the village now and out upon the broad dark highway, and still the men were singing in low humming tones as tired men sing to help their feet along;

'When the train pulled out with Donald
The folks all wept and cried;
Ses Donald; 'Do not weep me friends'
I'll fill your hearts with pride;
With me breast adorned with medals,
I'll seek me native shore,
And in the house of parliament
I'll represent Bras d'or'.

On and on they went through ten or fifteen verses, not singing lustily, just humming to keep the rhythm. They were old soldiers now, who knew without telling that they could never get along, unless they kept the beat and rhythm. Through the still night, the column crawled like a great swarm of buzzing locusts and with each repetition of the chorus, tired men hunched up their packs and picked up their feet. What a glory swinging along through the night towards the same goal and with the same purpose. His secret heart was touched by the song they sang, though none knew why but he.

It was all very well slithering down those half-mile slopes into the Somme Valley but all the time you'd know that at the bottom, there'd be a bridge and a brook, and then oh then, a half mile, a long

half mile of up-grade before you topped the next ridge. Horses fed to the minimum were tired, but those fifty-six baggage carts loaded to the limit, had to be kept steadily going. The mules and horses strained at their harness, sidling, slipping and striking out sparks from the cobbles in the night. Big Murdock was shouting as twenty men strained on a tow-rope to get a tired team along; those twenty picked men of Judique could pull as much as two teams of exen. There was Bill Livingstone plodding along, his haversack stuffed with poetry books, loaded down with two packs and two rifles; both ditches had to be watched for stragglers. The sick, and those whose feet conldn't travel any farther, were up on the officers' horses; two astride his; he was proud to remember that.

Staff officers dashed up in the darkness shouting "Why the Hell don't you get along? The fourth brigade is coming up behind you". And one young fellow, the Brigadier's staff-captain, clattering up in a shower of sparks, shouting to them in a rest period; "Get ahead get ahead! the fourth brigade's almost-----". Big Murdock had let a monstrous f--- in the middle of his speech, and when the young dicky-bird shouted; "Who did that? Have that man arrested and court martialled", he was answered by a low burst of tired sardonic laughter. He clattered off into the night and was seen no more. It was good then to see the first grey streaks in the East; no wonder Greeks weary with straining at the oars of the trireme, had hailed the dawn as a goddess. At last came the shelter of kindly woods, and breakfast in groups around the cookers, a cigarette cut in two, a little laughter, and long sleep in the green ferns.

A queerly-shaped disproportioned parcel from mother; from mother all right; mother's handwriting had been just as distinctive and joyous as her joyous self. She never wrote sentimental letters saying that she was praying for him (though probably she was) nor to keep warm and dry and safe in shelter. Always she wrote; "Go hard, and stamp those nasty Germans into the earth; the old man and I never

liked their manners, when we were sailing the seas". At the mouth of the dug-out, he ripped the parcel open. Oh joy of my heart, a dried salt codfish. How could mother know he was hungering and thirsting for a piece of good salt fish from home. As a matter of fact he had thirsted afterwards. All the sights and smells of home were in that package; kelp from the beaches, tang of the fog-laden sea-breeze, fish flakes, spruce trees and lobster shells on the land; fishing boats, piled up lobster traps, little wharves, rickety fish houses, bright coloured fir buoys. He had soaked it out in a petrol tin stolen from the British and scrubbed and boiled and scoured. "Watch that well", he had said to the sentry, "till I come back from rounds, for their's many in the 25th, would give a month's pay for a mouthful of salt-cod". Someone from headquarters mess, had gone back six miles to beg, borrow, buy or steal, six eggs and a tin of Carnation Cream.

What a breakfast in their dingy cave, the sad French sunlight making a crooked streak against the post that sustained the roof, a guttering night's candle stuck in a beer bottle, and a belated rat still tearing up scraps of paper under the duck-board'. They had heaped up the simmering fish into a high cone, and over it poured a libation of hot cream and chopped up eggs. There was much laughter in headquarters mess that morning; batmen and cooks got their share; it was too bad there was not enough to go round the whole battalion. Close and happy friendships, friendships formed in the face of the enemy, went along with the drab ugliness and sorrow of war. Nothing could be hid; everyone was known for what he almost truly was. Perhaps the ugliness made the good shine brighter for men saw the souls of others as if bodies were made of clear glass.

Running again down that old C. T. again, A. J. puffing and panting at his heels, and he had to pull off the eye-pieces of his gas-mask to see where he was going - those anti - dimming

mixtures never worked when you got boiling hot, sweating and steaming, no matter what books and lecturers said. A shell knocked down the edge of the rotten old trench, and buried both of them above the knees, but he had to pull out somehow and run forward even if his legs felt numb, for he was leading that day, and with the others jammed in the narrow ditch, almost in single file, he remembered how painfully slow the tail moved forward. They must reach the shelter of that slope in front. But at the bottom, when he reached it, there was twenty yards of impenetrable wire. Which way to turn? Toss a penny; right or left; someone must make a quick decision and take the blame if wrong; the shells were still coming over; the Boche must have spotters up, for they advanced their barage as they advanced. Well, turn right; he was tired and out of breath; he was no longer a football player. "Run ahead and find the gap;" he had shouted to Anderson and MacRae. They were both nineteen and could still run.

A shell burst between them, as they ran, and he stood stock-still, arms outstretched one foot on the ground the other poised in air, staring to see if they were gone; the only time, he could swear that he had stood on one foot in four years of war. As he stood thus poised, a hole opened at his very toe, a dud, a big dud; how close to being dead or a one-legged veteran. It looked like an intervention of providence or a touch on the shoulder by a guardian angel; but that was pure egotism, and he must not sink to the level of mistaking coincidence for causation. His knees were shaking, and young McKinnon tried to cover his confusion, by saying "Born to be hanged Sir", and blushed in the midst of a battle. Anderson and MacRae scrambled up unhurt, found a wide gap and they had all run forward to the welcome shelter of a back hill-side, where no shells could fall among them. Then they were all tired and he was staggering and felt like a little boy, who wanted mother.

Just before the crest, there were deep dug-outs made

for some other ancient, already half-forgotten battle, and he whistled and made the sign to halt and rest.

Along with A. J. the padre, who never missed a battle, he had gone down into the cool shelter of one that was deep and dark. Broad planked steps reached far down into the earth, and along these, the men ranged themselves; far down in the darkness he could catch the flicker of a match and the glow of cigarette ends.

A.J. nudged his knee. "You were angry with me yesterday, because I insisted on church parade before a battle, and because I did not raise your tune to the twenty-third Psalm".

"Anger comes and goes like the veering wind A.J. We were all raggy and tired. You're still the best padre in God's green world".

Then A.J. had lifted up his sweet voice and began to sing his tune, the tune he had learned in the cabin, mother's tune, and the men took up the singing. Up from the pit of darkness, floated their deep voices, and other voices about the sun-lit doorway called back in antiphonal melody.

The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want,
He makes me down to lie,
In pastures green he leadeth me
The quiet waters by.

So simple, so serene, so restful to tired nerves; all of the author, shepherd boy, lover, poet, soldier, priest and king was in it; not even Shakespeare at his best could better that.

They sang the hymn through several times; thus Cromwell's Ironsides might have sung before Naseby or Marston Moor. He hoped they were singing because the dud had missed him; A.J. his friend was, at any rate, and perhaps the others knew, for news travels

fast in war-time. Now for a little, they were close to Heaven; this the true ecstasy of religion, and a simple song from a great heart, had transformed a malodorous rat infested dug-out into one of God's great cathedrals.

In the midst of the dirt, sorrow, waste and confusion of war, tenderness and pity grow in the hearts of the roughest of men. What a bedraggled, dirty, half-starved cat she was, as she minced her way along the trench, driven by her necessity. The battalion pioneers had claimed her as their particular possession, cleaned her, dried her, and made her a great mess of bully beef and biscuit crumbs, which she gobbled greedily. She must have come down from Mercatel, where nothing but a stone cross stood; the Boche used it for a ranging mark, and there were poor food pickings there. The pioneers dug further into the trench bank, and made for her a soft bed of sand-bags in the corner of their shallow cave.

There, next morning, she had been delivered of four kittens. What a fuss they made over her and her offspring and how the word spread through the battalion! Seen, after six days in the line, the pioneers were bewhiskered dirty ruffians, but in reality, all these soldiers were kind-hearted boys, that were amused with kittens and windmills, that traded special oversized lice, and made strange musical instruments out of tin cans and strands of wire. Everyone who came to headquarters, inquired about the new family or stopped to stroke the mother cat. Even staff officers who arrived at five in the morning because the shelling was lightest then, called out cheerily on departure; "How are your reinforcements doing?" They were going back to safety and a hot breakfast of bacon eggs and coffee.

One evening just as dusk was settling down, came a sharp minor counter attack. Why the Boche made these useless efforts

he could never imagine; perhaps to bolster their own morale. Everyone was up on the firing step, banging away with rifle and Lewis gun, and the sergeants were lugging up bags of bombs. Suddenly he saw the mother cat prancing along the parapet, tail in air, rubbing her now sleek ingratiating sides against the men's heads and shoulders. In spite of the momentary anxiety, he paused for a moment to laugh. Of course, she had been scared by the racket, by the sudden rattle of rifle and Lewis gun, and had come from the pioneer's cave, for comfort and companionship. But the men always declared and stuck to it, that she had hopped up on the parapet, because she was a French cat, and wanted to help hold the line, by thumbing her paw at the Boche.

After the episode she was more of an idol than ever in fact she began to put on airs, and regarded her tenants with prim cat-like dignity. When they were relieved, the pioneers, nailed up a ragged sign; "Feed this cat and treat her well. She helped hold the line".

Such scraps and tags of living; so many little things remembered, so many big things lost from the dusty file of memory. Nearly all the remembered things were bound up with some minor success or a sudden flush of pleasure.

Somewhere in a French cottage after a hard tour in the line, wind and rain without but a snug glowing open fire within. Two were missing, since the last relief when they had played together. But they never spoke of those who were gone; that only brought misfortune upon others. Contrasts are everything in life, and after the misery of that last tour,the French peasant's cottage seemed a king's palace. The bottle was going round and they were all friends again and laughing as they made desperate bets at penny-ante. He had kept four cards, drawm to the middle of a straight, and by some miracle of chance, had got the right card. Somehow it seemed a greater triumph, than beating back a counter attack or successful raid, a moment of happiness well kept in memory's file.

Old Hilliard, afterwards Lord somebody or other sitting straight and erect on his charger; old Hilliard at the head of the Eighth Hussars with his tail wound like a giant snake through the streets of Meharicourt, and out into the country far behind. What a target, what an impossible position with the Boche bringing up reinforcements in buses on the sky line, and flowing in slow lines down the long brown slope in front! It was always the dream of cavalry men to catch the enemy in some broad grassy valley, and there to loose squadron after squadron and stick them with lances as they had stuck wild pig on the plains of India. No, the days of horsed cavalry was over, in this age of trenches and belts of barbed wire.

Old Hilliard sitting there quietly, stiff and stubborn and proud and ignorant of this kind of war, with his empurpled face mottled with blue veins; the old boy must have put many a gallon of port under his Sam Browne to get a face like that; how clearly etched had his picture remained in his brain. For that picture had registered

in seconds of great danger and acute brain action; every second wasted then might swing the balance from victory to defeat.

All this, he had seen and thought as he ran down the ridge towards the Eighth Hussars, after having called to Dubuc of the 22nd to get some Lewis guns up on the high ground to enfilade his front. Down the slope the grey lines of Boche were creeping in force, like an advancing swarm of locusts in some ugly dream.

He knew old Hilliard in a second's flash, as he ran towards him, but how should old Hilliard recognize him as a Colonial colonel, sweating, without a tunic, sleeves rolled up (it was the great glorious hot day the ninth of August) unshaven, after three days and two sleepless nights of battle; how could Hilliard recognize in him the young territorial lieutenant of the King's Colonials, who had sat beside him in the Hussars Mess at Colchester and told him tall stories of hunting buffaloes on the plains, grizzlies and mountain goats in the Rockies, though he had never been west of Montreal. What a colossal liar he had been, and how simple minded the old man!

His feet dragged wearily as he ran, like nightmare feet where every step is in a bog of clinging mud. Breathless he reached the old man, and breathless told his tale; not a second to be lost, not a word wasted.

"I'm the 25th Canadians. I only have two hundred men. The enemy is coming down the slope in front in force. You can see them. There's a gap of two thousand yards from my flank to the Eighth Canadian Battalion only one hundred strong. Will you dismount a squadron, and help fill that gap?" Old Hilliard stared and said never a word. In a conversation, even a one-sided one like this, a man on a horse, has a great advantage over a man on the ground. Perhaps the old fellow was deaf; again he repeated the situation making it more brief and pointed than before. Not a word in reply;

anger grew in his tired heart and brain; the courage, stupidity, immobility of these English was unbearable; there he sat stiffly his adjutant behind him, and a little removed, the first rank of the first troop all stiff and motionless, staring straight to their fronts, and giving him no heed. Well they'd get hell hammered out of them in a couple of minutes, as soon as the Boche got their whizz-bangs unlimbered, that he knew right well. Sure enough, next morning, Meharicourt was littered with dead horses. They sat so still and stiff and regardless in those tense seconds, that they might have been in a frieze on some Roman temple he a beggar on a corner of The Appian Way cadging for alms.

Down to the left, his eye caught the glint of another cavalry regiment well hidden in a fold of the low hills. There would be a fellow with some brains in his head. Anger made him bold.

"Give me a horse".

"Give me a horse".

Old Hilliard came to life and strangely enough said scornfully to his Adjutant; "Give this lad a troop horse". A trooper dismounted and handed over his troop horse; it was a good enough horse; it had four legs and could run. Up he climbed, and shot off hell-for-leather, towards the other regiment he had spied. He had no spurs but he knew how to kick a horse in the ribs; his rifle still gripped in his left hand, he laid across the saddle bow as if he were an Indian hunter. He was twice armed, for the forgetful trooper had left his carbine sticking in the leather carbine bucket. The ground was rough and there were old trenches and bits of barbed wire; these the troop horse took like a hunter, and somehow he had hung on, though his right foot never found the stirrup. He reached the 17th Lancers and found a bright young colonel, who had been smart enough to hide his men and horses

in a valley. He understood at once, and rushed two dismounted squadrons up to partially fill the gap. Back to the battalion he galloped, and as he rode, he wished he'd been big enough to tell old Hilliard to get his regiment out of Meharicourt before the inevitable shelling, but perhaps that advice would only have been regarded as a further piece of impertinence.

What was left of the battalion was arranged in depth, every little group of men crouching in holes, with their Lewis guns ready; they were old soldiers now who knew that a line was a foolish formation; they could arrange themselves without any special advice from him. Two oddly dressed officers were running about in the open with great gunny sacks over their shoulders; two Y. M. C. A. officers Clark and Armitage, good scouts, but non-combatants and they had no business here. "Beat it" he shouted to them "You'll get killed there in a minute and then I'll have more trouble on my hands".

"We stay at our own risk" they had shouted back, and went gaily and ignorantly along, chucking chocolate bars and packages of cigarettes to every little group of tired men. They had carried those bags up ten miles in the heat of that August day and they were helping to win the battle, for the men paused to grin thanks, munch a chocolate bar, and light a fag. "Don't forget I told you, when you're dead; this is no place for Holy Rollers". It all helped; a joke, a word of cheer, a flung cigarette, made all the difference between defeat and victory. Hilliard still sat stiffly and bravely at the head of his cavalry regiment in Meharicourt, but Dubuc's Lewis guns on the ridge, and the carbines of the 17th Lancers on his right, saved the day, and the Boche withdrew sullenly up the brown slope, as evening fell, leaving some dead behind them.

That night he was so tired that he really cared not who won the war, nor how long it lasted, nor what was the outcome. His legs and brain was gone; he seemed to be alone; he crept into the shelter of a half-shattered building on the road-side; some friendly soldier brewed him a great mess of tea in a mess-tin. But before he could sleep something kept pounding at his mind, like the blows of a little hammer, something kept ringing a bell, a telephone that must be answered, and some voice said over and over, 'horse', 'horse','horse'. But what about 'horse"; he was too tired to think; he could not remember. Though worn out he could not sleep; 'horse', 'horse', 'horse', the voice kept repeating. He half dozed for a moment and the horse grew into giant proportions and was stiff and gray and dappled like a rocking-horse, he had had at home. The Trojans were dragging it into Troy and it was so big in the hips and so high, that it stuck on sides and lintel, and left great smears of grey paint on the stone as they forced it through. Then the voice said; "Give this lad a troop horse" and suddenly he remembered the 8th Hussar horse, he had tied up in a thicket before the counter-attack. Poor beast it would be dying of thirst and hunger. The guttering candle cast a light on the faces of a few men lying on the floor, faces of weary men grey and yellow with fatigue. He could not send one of them. Wearily he dragged himself to his feet and went out to find the horse. There was a brook near-by, he remembered. Everything was still now; not a shot not a shell; the Boche was probably more tired than they; everyone was sleeping now, probably the sentries were sleeping on their feet, one shoulder propped against a wall. And up on the brown slope,some wounded were slowly dying. It was so still that he could hear insects chirping in the grass, and it startled him,

for his ears had not caught their shrill tones for years. He found the horse that whinnied at his approaching steps. He led him to the brook; what drinking; the horse stuck his muzzle into the water almost up to his eyes. Then after the horse had drunk his full, he held a long bridle rein and let him graze in the thick grass by the brook. He would probably have a belly-ache in the morning, but that was better than a night of thirst and hunger. He took off saddle and gear and tied the horse up again in the thicket. He was a good stout horse and he would send him back to the quarter master in the morning. The 8th Hussars would never miss him; moreover had not old Hilliard said; 'Give this lad a troop horse'.

He retraced his steps in the cool still night air. Nature was already beginning to repair what they had ruined that day. Now as he lay down again in the half-shattered hut, the hammer pounded no more, no bells rang.

High morning when the snarling guns woke him; he found he had been sleeping in a way-side shrine with shattered roof and holy pictures painted on the walls.

VI

"The strongest oaths are straw to the fire i' the blood".

In early June, the two tall cherry trees at the foot of his garden burst into bloom. Branches and leaves were quite hidden by their radiant cones of ivory whiteness. Yearly he looked forward to the coming of these blossoms. Poets see with an inward eye, and interpret the feelings of many mute men in some lovely lyric;

"Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go,
To see the cherry hung with snow".

His blooms lasted but a day or two; they were strangely ephemeral, as were all things of intense beauty, much less lasting than the pink and white glory of the gravenstein trees. When the west wind came on a certain day, the air danced in a cherry-bloom snow storm, and the brown soil of his garden and the broad-leaved plants were whitened by this fairy snow.

Plenty of cherries came later, cherries red, small and sour, for the trees had never been pruned, spruces now clustered around their bases, and for many years they had neither been manured or cultivated. But it was no use fussing with them, for the robins took all the fruit; they fulfilled their purpose for him by being beautiful for a day.

Robins apparently, liked cherries above all else, and in cherry-time they were always excited, chattering, quarrelling and even pushing one another off branches in their greedy anxiety to get more than their share. In swarms they came; apparently the local robins invited in all their uncles, their cousins, and their wives from the country-side for this cherry festival. Perhaps it took on something of the nature of a political or religious convention.

For he knew his local robin neighbours very well; there were always four pairs of them that dined on the lawn every evening, as he drank his mug of tea and munched his sandwich by the window. They were comforting, cheery, neighbours; really, quite good company. Along the short-cut lawn they tripped with one ear cocked, listening, not looking down at all. Certainly they must hear the worms crawling in the earth, for after a second of reflective listening, came a sharp pounce and a fat reluctant worm was drawn from his burrow. Sometimes however, the curious worm, night-crawler, was so long, that the robin went quite back on his heels, and ruffled his tail feathers as well as his dignity, in a ridiculous attitude, and sometimes when he had reached the limit ~~of his~~ of his extension, the tail of the worm was still clinging to the hole with whatever power he had. Now, if there had been any co-operation between robins, was the time for one to help the other; but there was no co-operation, it was every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. When the worm was very long and very strong, there was always a moment of excitement; two warriors were in battle;

the robin intense and angry, the worm stubborn and resistant; in a small way England and Germany were at it; one had to get his supper, the other had to save his life. But the robin, the cunning nest-builder, had more brain than the worm, that burrowed dully in darkness. Stretched to the limit of his pull, the robin would suddenly let go, and with a blitz-krieg stroke, grasp the worm by the middle. Now he had a new purchase, and the local war was over. Rommel the desert fox was dragged ignominiously out, finished off, and cut into appropriate lengths. Hitler, Von Rumstead and Kesselring were still cowering in the darkness underground; but some fine dewy evening they too would come up to have a look around, and sniff the air, and the robin would be listening and waiting.

They liked a close-shaved lawn for their operations and he kept it close for them ; in fact he felt a certain kinship with them. He was one one side of the window glass munching beef sandwiches, and they were without chewing up worms; both had to eat to live; their path of travel led from nest to lawn in search of food; he plodded along the path from house to garden for the same reason. He built a house to shelter himself from the weather and they built more cunningly devised nests with whatever materials they could pick up, made with sound engineering principles, woven in the crotch of some swaying tree. In the nest building season, he often scattered cotton wool or bits of string about the lawn, and these they eagerly carried off to make a fleecy lining for their homes. They had their love affairs in the spring amidst much lyric music, and often reared eight little robins in a season; he had reared six young; theirs flew from the nest to try the strength of their wings; his had flown too. Did they, he wondered, keep any track of their offspring; perhaps in this regard man was superior to the robin. He had a roof and they did not seem to have wit enough to make a roof for their nexts; in a rainy season they must get rather

soaked and miserable, no matter how carefully they spread wings and feathers over their warm eggs or callow fledglings. They were pretty good citizens and apparently stuck to one mate throughout a season, providing the home well with food, and quite untroubled by the idea of sex, and ensuing moral principals; they never strutted before their mates like the vain and shameless barn-yard cock.

Happy in their love, they filled the dawn hours of May and June with their singing, shrill and noisy, but not always melodious; probably the intervals in the robin scale were spaced differently from his. Certainly in one respect they were much wiser than he, for when the nip of autumn came in September air, they gathered in restless flocks, whirled, chattered, quarrelled as they elected leaders, and after a little practice in squadron flying, winged it off to Florida for a comfortable winter. They made no fuss about good-byes or luggage, nor about the odd ones, weak of wing, that were left behind to winter in the snow. He could think about the robins and observe their ways; there he seemed to have an advantage for they did not appear to think about him at all. They merely watched always, and furtively and flew up into the beeches when he stepped out through the door. They were not as trustful and friendly as the swallows and the juncos; they were perhaps not much interested in him, but they certainly knew how to mind their own business.

But this morning as he piled stones into his barrow, he was annoyed at both Jason and the robins; it was impossible to sentimentalize about life too much; somehow all transcendental ideas seemed to rest on a bed rock of solid material existence. Jason had approached with stealthy tread, watched him in silence wheeling off loads of small stones, and departed with the Parthian shot; "It's the small brain that carries the heavy load". Meaning that he was a fool to wheel stones out of his garden. Jason had a theory about

stones in a garden, that bolstered his own inherent indolence; his garden was plastered with small stones in the rows. "Stones hold the heat" he used to say, "and keep the plants warm at night like a hot beach-rock in flannel or a pig in bed". But how could one hoe or cultivate with the rows rim-racked with stones.

And as for the robins, that were such good companions of evenings on the lawn, they were quite impossible in the garden. They came at the crack of dawn between bursts of their orchestra music and picked holes in every strawberry. Not a bad diet that, rich in vitamins, as we say now-a-days, cherries, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, to tone up the system with green stuffs for breakfast, and good solid worm meat for dinner, to sustain the strength. The robin dieticians had probably approved this diet for their tribe. And what the robins ruined, the impudent chipmunks finished. They plucked the berries, held them between front paws and ate comfortably as if they were the complete and original owners. In the animal world, there seemed to be no sense of mine and thine, yet somehow they got along.

Someone a few years back, had told him that he could keep off the invading and pilfering robins by laying old herring-nets over his beds. Old herring-nets were a drug on the market; they could easily be got. He had pegged out his garden with two foot pegs and spread out the nets.

Then his troubles really began; the chipmunks of course crawled under the nets and ate as before, but the robins became entangled in the meshes. Sometimes of a morning he would find four enmeshed, two that could be set at liberty, one quite dead, and one with a broken wing emitting sad plaintive chirps. It was too hateful; he enjoyed the robins as neighbours and he could buy strawberries; he let the beds run to weeds and eventually

ploughed them under.

But he must get on with his moving of stones; he had promised himself to take off twelve loads, and ten had been already moved and dumped against the stone wall. That pronouncement of the local oracle; "small brains carry heavy loads" still rankled a little. That was a bit of cheek on Jason's part; but Jason had no respect for book-learning. He wheeled off the two loads he still owed, and sat down in the sun to smoke.

A good day for salmon fishing; fish would be running now in the Medway and perhaps in the little French Salmon River; bright fish from the sea with sea lice still on them. Perhaps he would never again see the swirl that brought the heart in the mouth; feel again/the tug and solid weight that meant a well-hooked fish, and make the quick calculation as to direction of run and time of first jump. He might fish a few easy near-by pools, but never again take a punt through a boiling rapid after a downstream fish----------

"Come back after a fortnight full of fresh air and sunshine. You're getting a bit crabby and crotchety, and you need fish and a river", West Wind had said to him. He was tired and worn and draggy, at the end of that term, and marking the provincial papers. He spent a morning overhauling his gear, a very pleasant part of salmon fishing, and said good-bye to the kids. They would hardly miss him; West Wind ruled the household.

And what a fortnight it had been on that far northern river, that slid quietly in long still-waters to roar over a sudden rapid between its grave forested hills. Every day was a day of sunshine or gentle rains, so warm that they did not hinder his fishing. The water was just right, falling a little, and the fish were coming up fresh from the sea with many grilse among them. Every day he had killed at least one fish and on one grey day, he had taken four.

And to add to his pleasure, he had had Joe as a guide, Joe a first rate fellow, a good fisherman, who knew where a fish would lie and an entertaining raconteur. Joe had had four years of war, and they spoke the same language. Moreover, Joe picked up stories from every man he fished with, and improved on many of them; you could never tell what corner of the world would be the locale of Joe's next story; like Jules Verne he travelled by proxy. That season his two best stories, recounted conversations between the Dean of Saint Paul and the Verger, in regard to the pigeons, that befouled the cathedral's front steps, and the conversation between a judge of South Carolina and a negro who had made an assault on a white man. They were good stories told with a right humorous twist, with just the proper timing and pauses for applause, but they could hardly be printed in a book for general reading. Joe had the instinctive art of the raconteur. Here is a human mystery;

two persons may tell the same story in almost the same words and with almost the same timing and intonation; yet one is painful and we pretend to laugh, the other tickles us into gusts of mirth.

> "A jest's prosperity lies in the ear of him that hears it", writes the greatest of poets, but certainly a large proportion of the jest's wealth lies in the tongue of the teller.

The story alone cannot carry itself; the personality of the teller must permeate it. That is why it is so hard to put anything down in cold print; a spoken 'yes' or 'no' may possess a dozen shades of meaning, and joke books are always sad.

That night, that last night, the river was in a glow of magic; the sun was lingering low in the western valley, and along both banks the tops of tall hemlocks and sturdy oaks were touched with a yellow glow, the shelving rocks in black shadow. By the brook, he pushed his canoe into the river, and drifted down alone to the lip of the rapid, in the hour fishermen love best. All around him that night, the river was singing in a dozen different keys, with strange intervals, all somehow harmonized by the bass of the rapid, the burden of the river's song. Since he was alone - he wished to be alone on that last night - his only chance of killing a fish, was to let out a hundred feet of killock line. Then if he hooked a fish, he could hold his rod in one hand and with the other pull quickly away from the rapid. He let out every bit of killock rope, and made the end fast to the nearest aft thwart; the light canoe checked in a current that flowed smooth but was slyly swift and strong, swerved, yawed and pranced, like a young thorough-bred, keen to off on his first race.

While he was greasing his casting-line, and tieing on his dry fly of bucktail, that Joe had cunningly tied, a gay-coloured shell-drake and his more modest mate, led their impudent

of half-grown young, into a sheltered pool just below the black shelving rocks. Tonight the river seemed to be calling on her foremost stars, to put on her best show for him. By stretching his neck, he could just see them over the lip of the rapid between two ledges. They darted about at great speed like little motor boats, snapping at the gaspereaux with which the river was infested. They were a nuisance on the river; it mattered not about the gaspereaux, but they killed many trout and parr and even ventured to attack the grilse; only the beauty of their multicoloured feathers striped in brilliant colours in this evening glow atoned somewhat their evil performance. That was the time to see and enjoy colour out-of-doors, just at sun-set. They had tremendous pep and vitality and obviously got a lot of impudent fun out of life.

Presently as if to give an exhibition of what he and his could do, the cock shell drake, led his family straight across the down-dropping rapid, through its greatest foam and fury, to a pool near the further bank. Now the bright colours were accentuated by the flashing gleam and the cream of foam. Some of the young were timid in taking off, but they eventually followed papa, the experienced water patriarch, though in mid-rapid two were twirled bodily over and momentarily submerged in swirls of foam and bubbles. So absorbed was he in the beauty of their swift passage, their courage and confidence in their leader, that he stopped rubbing fly and casting line and sat rigid, smiling to himself.

Everything seemed to go just right on that evening of evenings. He took his second rod and tried the pool first with a spinner - he knew this was against the rules - to see if there was a fish in the pool. There was; he moved just enough to make a tiny surface swirl, for he could not resist moving for that flash of twirling silver, that reminded him of some shining fish he had eaten in the sea. He was no untried adolescent grilse, but a full

grown youth, who had made three voyages to the ultimate gravelly lakes, found his mate, cast his seed, and spent three glorious holidays in the deep cold sea.

He laid down his spare rod, and cast his dry fly with a short line. The light was low, the fly was small and it was hard to keep an eye on it amid bits of foam and bubbles; if lost for a second the eye never re-captured it, till it floated out a spot of dark on the slick of the rapid. To watch a dry fly floating along after a neat cast, is a joy even when fish do not take it.

But he had luck that night; on the seventh cast, he raised the fish and hooked him well. The hooked fish darted up-stream. All well so far. Quickly he hauled in his killock rope, and the light canoe slipped up-stream like a homing bird. The first minute is the important time, then the fish consents to be led by a gentle strain on his lip, he is still bewildered and has not had time to arouse indignation and anger at the insult to his free dignity nor formulate plans for escape; that is the precious moment to get him up-stream away from the rapid. The fish was well up-stream, before he made his first run and jump to which he had to respond, with a well-timed dip of his rod.

In a sandy cove, he manoeuvred his canoe ashore, drew her out, and was glad to feel grass and gravel under his feet; it was always more pleasant for him to handle a fish from the shore, than from punt boat or canoe. All this time his trained left arm had kept the maximum strain he dared on the fish. Now gaff in hand, he followed up the sloping bank, threw his long legs over a barbed cattle fence, that snipped out a triangular tear in his fishing breeches and stood at last at brook-mouth, where he had launched his canoe. Now the fish was tiring, now he could reel in line, now in the half-light that still penetrated the black river water, his

eye caught a momentary gleam of silver; he was turning on his side now, he would soon be through. Grasping his gaff more firmly, he shortened his line still further and stepped knee-deep into the river. This was always a moment of difficulty and excitement; fear aroused by a too early and ill-advised jab with the gaff, lent the fish new strength and courage to dart towards mid-stream, to swim down-stream and be lost in the roar and foam of the rapid. The fish was ten feet below him; again he shortened his line, stretched out the gaff on the bottom, inclined his rod well up-stream and led the salmon within a yard of his toes. A quick jab with gaff now, a quick slackening of the reel, and the salmon was thumping in the grass.

He gave him the conventional coup de grace, a crack on the nose, and sat down on the grassy bank his heart thumping. He lit a cigarette, drew the smoke well into his lungs, and exhaled through his nostrils; this was the moment of the fisherman's heaven. A crooked, growing half moon, was just rising over the black hemlocks, casting streaks of gold and silver on the water. He felt as if he could spread his arms, take off and levitate, so thrilled was he with his success, the music of the river and the beauty of the night. After a little he laid the gleaming fish in his canoe - he would paddle back to camp - untied hook and cast, unjointed and cased his rods - hiding the spinner carefully, and launched his canoe into the shallow water.

He put a rock in the eyes, to trim the canoe, and had just settled himself firmly in the aft seat, and was pushing off with his paddle, when he became aware of a woman standing on the further bank, a little further up-stream. Now as he looked searchingly at her, in the dim half-light, she raised her hand and beckoned to him. He had intended to paddle close up the east shore well out of swift current and where little back-waters and eddies, would carry him along, but just at the moment, when she beckoned, the river current caught the canoe's bow, and slanted her across stream. Hardly thinking at all, he paddled on slantingwise, and grounded the canoe on the west bank, a few feet below where the woman was standing. He sat still holding the canoe steady, with the paddle, as the woman walked toward him. She was wearing wood's clothes but she was trim and neat and obviously no native. She looked into the canoe.

"You have a fine fish there", she said smiling.

"The biggest I've taken this year".

"Fifteen pounds?"

"Just about".

"I don't fish myself; women are rarely any good at it; but I enjoy watching others; I saw the whole performance, from the time you dropped down to the rapid, and watched the shell-drake family. I enjoyed that performance too".

"It's been a perfect fisherman's evening".

"Almost perfect. The river's very sentimental to-night; its singing Shubert and Mendelssohn".

"A little off key. Are you a musician?"

"I used to be. Don't you remember me?"

He stared blankly; thought hard; then it suddenly dawned on him.

"Why you are Mary Stuart".

"Right, the first time and you haven't seen me for fifteen years".

"Can it be that long? "

"I'm thirty-four now and I was nineteen, when Davy dropped the hood about my neck".

He climbed out of the canoe, and shook hands with her.

"I'm glad to see you again. Colleges are sad places, you no sooner get to know and like one lot, than they fly away and another brook of fledglings is hatched. You haven't changed much".

"Ain't aged much, as Mrs. Jodrey says on my arrival here every summer. I have a cottage on the tributary stream.

"I didn't recognize you at first the light was so bad, but now you're almost as you used to be, sitting in the third seat from the aisle in the front row".

"Do you remember them that way?"

"Always. I seem to have photograph after photograph in my brain, of rows of faces. Of course the early photographs are most vivid, because I was then most frightened".

"Frightened! You were a most savage dictator".

"Dictators are always afraid, and their savagery is in direct proportion to their fear. I was young then; I've learned to teach a little better since ".

"I still have the callow essays I wrote for you".

"Much the best in your year".

"Thanks! You used to be sparing in your praise, long ago".

"It's hard to praise when you're young, you're not altogether sure of your own standards of judgement".

"Will you do me a favour?"

"Of course if I can".

" Will you come and have a picnic supper with me to-night? My cabin is quite close by. The night and river are at their best, and you have just had a man's triumph".

"I'd like to; it will be a romantic ending. I have to start for home to-morrow."

He hauled out his canoe, and on a dried limb hung up his shining salmon, well out of reach of a prowling otter, then followed her through the heavy sweetness of a hemlock wood, to a place that looked strange and unearthly in the moonlight.

Years and years ago, the river had been dammed at the rapid, and spring freshets had backed up and swirled in eddies, to form two rounded dunes, of straw-coloured glistening sand. Some tall trees had been submerged by sand and water, choked and drowned, and these giants,long bereft of foliage, lifted grey gaunt arms to the moon-lit sky. But as soon as the dam was broken, and the river returned to her erstwhile channel, nature had began her work of restoration and decoration. Unlike the politicians, she had her plans ready, when the war was over, and began construction work at once; her children never stood in bread-lines. Over these yellow dunes, she had festooned green trailing vines in a hundred fantastic patterns and set out in the sand a multitute of sturdy young pines to compete,grows strong,and replace their half-buried parents. Between the two rounded dunes, there was but a crack, a narrow passage, through which the path twisted, till it opened out to a little grassy level.

He was surprised to see a little fire glowing between some gathered rocks, a coffee pot on a flat stone and a picnic basket.

"You see I was all ready for my guest".

"Quite the complete camper".

I come here every summer to my cabin; I was born hear here".

"Children? "

"No, No children".

"Isn't it a bit lonesome?"

"I like to be alone. But I'm glad I have an old friend for supper to-night. I've been waiting several nights to invite you, but Joe was always with you".

"You might have asked Joe too. He's the prize story-teller on the river".

I suspect I know most of Joe's stories, that are fit to print".

"Yes his edition would have to be expurgated like an englished Boccaccio".

She put the coffee pot on the fire where it soon began to boil, opened the little hamper in a business like fashion, shook out a white tea-cloth, laid out plates, cups, forks, and spoons, slices of cold chicken, sandwiches, and a dish of lobster. The air about them was warm mellow and sweet smelling, the song of the river muted by the trees.

"You're a good provider".

"We have a game in the country, where everything is dirt cheap, wondering how much a dinner of chicken and lobster, would cost in New York."

"I've played that too, it seems to make food taste better".

He was very hungry, and ate almost greedily, and despite all rules of diet, washed down half-chewed sandwiches with gulps of hot coffee. They talked and laughed naturally about the college of her day, of this and that, of who had married, and how

some inconsidered people, had already risen to semi-greatness in a small way. Two or three of the best girls were already dead, and several of the boys had perished in the war. It was impossible to predict of youth, who would have the luck, who the iron to withstand the world's dangers and disillusionments. After supper, she brought out from the depths of the hamper, a little crooked bottle of cherry brandy, and two slim glasses; they sipped and sipped as they smoked their cigarettes, enjoyed each others company and the loveliness of the night; there was no breeze to stir the tops of pine and hemlock; silence, save for the muted song of the river.

"I told you a half-lie tonight".

"Quite a common social occurence".

"I knew you were fishing the river this summer. I came here after thinking a long time about it, to have this hour with you".

To that he could think of no adequate reply.

"Of course, half the young girls in a class are in love with the good-looking young professor, who seems learned and wise, like a fiery young God, but I never got over wanting you".

"But you married!"

You were married too and happily married; I knew you liked me better than the rest but I had no chance".

" Are you happily married?"

"Happily enough. You remember John. He's a successful lumber man, kind and fairly intelligent, but he can give me no children, and I want children desperately. I'm neither promiscuous nor lustful, but I must have at least one child.

"Hard luck".

"Do you understand what I am asking you. I know it isn't quite fair to your wife, but surely she can spare a bit of

you, for fifteen years of waiting".

"I suppose I understand".

Then she moved over to a blanket spread at the foot of the steep founded sand-dune, took off her cap, and shook out her hair till it flowed about her shoulders. He looked up at the grey-blue moonlit sky, at the ghostly dead trees stretching out gaunt granches, at the young pines growing with sturdy indifference. A twig on the fire flared up and he caught the mute appeal in her eyes.

'The strongest oaths are straw to the fire i' the blood,'

The killock rope was broken, the canoe was broadside in a smooth swift current; he was in the foam and fury of the rapid before he knew it. There was no hindering memory of past or present no dread of the future, all was quite forgotten in the intoxicating glory of the night.

Three days later he stepped into his home kitchen, his two best fish gleaming in either hand. West Wind ran joyfully to meet him but when she caught his wavering eye, she halted.

"You've been killing sheep sailor man".

"You're right but only one sheep and never again. I'll tell you all about it when the children are in bed".

And tell her he did, every word painfully and slowly as they sat before the fire that night. Of course, she was hurt, but she was neither outraged nor indignant. She listened in silence, asked no questions, and after his faltering conclusion sat silent for a little.

"It was all part of the fishing, the night and the moonlight. Poor woman, I'm almost glad, but I must keep my self-respect. Go up stairs now, and have a steaming hot soak,and a thorough scrub with red soap. What was the Hebrew period of'

purification; between two moons wasn't it. Well you'll have to sleep in the children's house for a whole month. I'll be missing you but sleep there you must. I'll be missing you; it's a long time between moons, but sleep there you must".

He did as he was bid and was glad to get off with such a light sentence.

Only once was that strange episode referred to. West Wind reading the paper looked up to say; "I see that Mary Stuart, Mary Fisher she is now, has been delivered of a male child; she'll be complete now. I hope the child will be bright; perhaps he'll be a poet".

VII

"We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep".

That morning he looked at his garden in full fruition with tired but almost infinite satisfaction. It was September now, and the swamp maples were in their full glory of red and yellow, the road-sides edged with masses of golden-rod and wild aster. Now the mountain-ash hung out her heavy clusters of red berries, that gleamed in the sunshine, and the withering alder leaves began to take on that hue of heliotrope, that is so beautiful among the snow of winter. The hackmatacks were turning yellow brown; of all the trees only the spruces and firs would retain their form, colour and friendly, sturdy, independence, against the blasts of winter. Each growing thing must follow its own nature and fulfill its peculiar destiny. Every day the lake got bluer and fuller though the rains had been light. "Winter gives the ponds and rivers time to fill up". Why should that commomplace tag learned in childhood stick in his memory when ten thousand glorious lines conned with much labour, had quite slipped away! Now the partridges were leading their coveys of ten or twelve, out of the wood, proud of their accomplish-ment, to drum and preen their feathers in sunny places. Every night now, the wood-cock whistled into the alder covers from their long holiday summer in the northland. The loons gave out at evening their melancholy cries, a presage of their departure;

the swallows were flying high and the robins in whirling flights were chattering and quarrelling over the election of their squadron leaders. They were all going south, the blue-jays grosbeaks, and chickadees would linger a while, but he would be glad when the summer birds winged back.

It had been a good growing summer of misty mornings, plenty of sunshine at mid-day, heavy dews and warm gentle rains at night. This year, the God of gardens had been indeed propitious, and had run his department well; perhaps he was sorry for the half-starved folk of Europe and had decided to fill their barns with plenty. In this organization of growing things, he felt that he played a very minor role; he could originate nothing, only help and encourage what the Life Force shot out; he was perhaps the lowest in the employ of Ceres, goddess of plenty.

Now that the plants had fulfilled or about fulfilled their destinies, they sprawled in a kind of comfortable chaos. Only the corn refused to bend and let go its stiff dignity. The potato tops, and tops of low beans, had turned brown and withered, but the others retained their bright green of summer, and leaned their fruited vines across the rows, on whatever was near and lower. In spite of his watchfulness, the robber squash, had over-run some rows of carrots, beets and low beans, and had clambered up the corn. Three squashes were ripening pendant, three feet from the ground, and the patient corn endured this imposition with stiff uncomplaining dignity. He should have spared the corn, and given the intruding squash vines a new direction; they were soldiers both subtle and bold who advanced taking advantage of cover.

Never had the tomatoes grown so well; though he had staked and tied them, their vines drooped to the ground with their loads of half-ripened fruit. It was impossible to fully

ripen tomatoes in his garden, but they turned sweet, succulent and ruddy if placed on sunny windows sills, or by a strange reverse, if wrapped in paper and stored in single layers in dark drawers. The corn was seven feet high with fat aggressive husks, and only a few had been marred by the borer; the pole-beans though he had picked and picked, were still laden with seven-inch pods with only a little rust showing on the lower leaves, and he would have at the very least, thirty bushels of potatoes. The late planted turnips had grown like mad, and were crowding one another since he had not given them space enough in thinning. And the parsnips were two inches through with ten inch roots. Beets, carrots, Swiss chard and spinach always grew well if given any chance, and he had counted one hundred and five squashes. That meant, that at least twenty more, were hidden away in this autumn chaos of over-production. Most of his cucumbers had turned yellow and gone to seed, it was hard to give away cucumbers because anyone could grow them. Why did he repeat the mistake year after year, of planting so many.

Now he had a problem of distribution, reputed to be more difficult than the problem of production, the lack of which bred half our economic troubles. Some sinister prophet had recently proclaimed, "When the dollar buys much and the nations plow in crops and burn wheat, cotton and coffee, wars are at hand". Indeed a sinister prediction; would the materialists forever rule the world.

If he stored, all he had produced, in his cellar, he would not be able to consume one twentieth of it, since he was alone. The apparent solution of his problem of over-production, explained his morning's feeling of tired satisfaction. He had produced all this with much sweat and labour in his Victory Garden, moved by the somewhat childish impulse, that he must do his share in helping to

feed the world in this time of desperate war, of rickety children, and half-starved refugees. He was weary because on the last ten nights, he had got to bed very late or rather very early in the morning.

This was his plan of distribution; to place by night cartons of vegetables on the door-steps of poor unknown people in the neighbouring town. This plan tickled his fancy; if they got his vegetables, they need not buy others; no one must know and he would create a mystery of well-doing. Some of the more ignorant, might attribute his gifts to a summer Santa Claus or perhaps their Patron Saint or Guardian Angel. Once and for all he would knock that monstrous lie upon the head; "You never got something for nothing". Bask in the sunshine, look out at the blue lake; don't you get those for nothing, not even for the asking. He was sick to death of these old bromides; 'Human nature can't be changed', "Give the poor bath-tubs and they'll put coal in them", that rang ~~rang~~ about the world promoted by those who never looked, and did not want to look.

In his near-by shed-garage, he had scales and plenty of big cartons, that he had accumulated, to achieve his purpose. There he weighed out each carton as if he were rationing an army. The total weight of each, must be kept down to sixty pounds, for with more weight than that, he could not move swiftly and easily. Thirty pounds of potatoes, he placed in the bottom of each carton, and piled each high with the requisite amount of tomatoes, corn, parships, beans, beets and carrots; on the very top of each box were stuck bunches of thyme, summer-savory or some other sweet-smelling garden herb.

For the last ten nights he had left his country place at eleven, his trunk stuffed full, and all available space in the back-seat piled high. Usually he took six cartons, and once

in a while, seven. Reaching the town after midnight he had distributed these in the poorer quarters; over sixty cartons he had already carried, and half the work was not yet done. Once as he stumbled on a loose board, a poor woman had flung open a door and cursed him for a prying thief; he had to drop that carton by the gate; once a policeman had challenged him and whistled, but on both occasions, he had managed to scramble to his car, hop in, and drive away. How could he explain to a small town policeman, or to a big town policeman, for that matter, what he was trying to do. It was stealing in reverse, and that would be beyond comprehension. He was odd, he knew, except for West Wind and mother he had always been a lone wolf. Sometimes lugging cartons in this reverse thieving, his heart pounded ominously, but that was nothing; it had often pounded thus at night, and kept him from sleeping after a bump on the river.

Even though he was dog-tired, three bushels of potatoes must be dug, weighed out and packed for the night's operation. He got out his fork and set to work, driving the prongs down deep, and wide from the stock, so that none of the tubers would be cut or marred. The potatoes had grown famously this year; there were often seven to a hill, and they were quite clean and free from scab. He soon forgot his weariness, in the pleasure of laying the potatoes in neat rows to dry thoroughly in the sun, for there is an instinctive pleasure in reaping what we have sown, or even like the squirrels, in heaping up in secret, stores for winter, harvests, we have never sown. It was even pleasant, to gather up armfuls of the wilted tops to heap them on his high compost heap against the stone-wall.

There all his weeds had gone; by next spring they would be rich and rotten. He had often thought that one could judge a man's development, by the time-length of his plans for the future. In crowded Barbadoes, a negro, who has three bananas, thinks no more than an hour ahead, or until his stomach nerve sends out a signal; a wiser man thinks a year or two ahead; the Russians had tried a five year plan. Compost heaps are a six months plan for the future; since it is the rotted material of growth, nothing is better to cast in the rows; some prophetic agriculturist had said; "Let nothing go off your fields except what can walk off".

As he dug and sweated, he reflected also, that he knew singularly little about the ancestry of plants; this coming winter he must try and find out. Of course their real origin was hidden by unlettered time and lack of records. Who, he wondered had brought home the first wild tuber to nurse it into a potato, and who had found the first wild wheat growing, fostered it, discovered yeast, and baked the first bread. What finders early people had been! The wheel and lever were the basis of all engineering. The Micmacs, so Joe Charles had told him, used to burn a piece of forest thoroughly, dig holes among the charred stumps and in each hole put a piece of potato and one gaspereau. Those were the golden days when the squaws were the gardeners; the men hunters and fighters. In a like manner, the early pioneers had grown burnt-land potatoes, before they had time or strength to clear and plow.

He was not a patient experimenter, he lived in a world half dreams half-fancy, but once in a while, he tried to be like solid practical men, that looked so solemn and assured, and always kept their trousers pressed and their shoes shined. Once, he reflected, he had made an experiment with potatoes

to see if he could invent something, for it always saddened him when he visited a great city and looked at shops, street cars, elevated trains and tall buildings, to think that he had no real part in these, and had really contributed nothing new in the march of humanity.

So he had tried with potatoes. The potato ball, that grows green and hard from the fertilized blossom and is the delight of little boys to shoot from sling-shots at their elders, since they both sting and burst on impact, contains the true seed of the potato. But strange to say, like the planted apple-seed, which does not produce a tree like that from which it sprung, the potato seed produces nothing akin to its parent. He had gathered a ball from his tallest, strongest, greenest, lustiest potato plant, dried the seeds and in the following spring planted them in a little hot-bed. They grew and in September, he dug them; they were about as big as peanuts. From these he selected the dozen biggest, and the next spring planted these and in September got tubers as big as smallish apples. Again a selection; again another year of planting and waiting. Now he got a full sized potato; but such a potato, God Almighty himself had never seen. It was purple and green on the outside and within full of reddish veins; in taste it was acrid with a suggestion of grease and stale salt mackerel. No he was no inventor or discoverer, in the world of material things.

So much time had he spent in reflection, that the potatoes were dug before he knew it, and nearer five bushels than three. While he was tossing them into his barrow to pack in the shed, he heard the buzz and throb of a plane. That might be Mike; Mike's field was only fifty miles off, and he often flew over of a morning, to circle the garden; it was long-range company but none the less comforting. To the old man fifty miles had been a good day's journey, now to Mike it was but a matter of mimutes. Mike just turned nineteen; it seemed just the other day that he

had turned him up, and spanked him for plugging the drain with soap, grease, and putty. Mike had wanted an ocean to sail and try out his submarine, and the flooded bath tub had seemed an appropriate place. Little recked he, of what happened to ceiling and walls of room below. Perhaps he had been angry and unjust in that spanking; after all if a boy had a boat it was logical to make a local ocean; it had only been a light spanking but Mike had howled with infant indignation, and eyed him with suspicion for a week. He squinted into the sun and caught a flash of yellow; yes, it was an Anson, Mike's training plane. The yellow bird swooped and circled till it seemed just skimming the tops of the cherry trees and Mike looked over the side and grinned with his stubby Irish face. It was strange how each of the kids had somehow grown up to suit the name hung upon him in infancy. The Irish strain in Mike was pretty far back. He wished that the boy wouldn't fly quite so low; it was quite against the rule, but he was certain in his heart that that is just what he would have done at nineteen.

The Anson circled again and Mike dropped out a tiny parachute with a burden; circled once more, climbed and was lost in a fleecy fair-weather cloud. The parachute fell among alders, the woodcock cover on the lake's edge. He ran down the path quickly to retrieve it. It was not hard to find, and was soon disentangled from the bushes. The parachute was a home-made ramshackle contraption, typical of Mike, who liked to make things strong, but never had the patience to finish them neatly. Had he found that parachute in the middle of the Sahara, he believed, he would have known it was Mike's.

The parcel contained four chocolate bars, a package of dates, four bananas, three packages of R.C.A.F. cigarettes, and a thin bundle of letters. Mike could buy all these cheap at his

canteen, and he was the one who liked giving presents most of all. The three brief letters were from David in England, Martha in France and Mary with her hospital unit in Belgium. David was a Wing-Commander now with a D.F.C. and bar, quite a swell. David had been destined to success from childhood. Across the top of each letter was scrawled 'Pass on to Dad' and that is what Mike had just done. "Flying Mosquito's now" wrote David. "Our lot got seven Messerschmitts last week. Whenever I get one or lay an egg on Cologne, Dusseldorf, Duisberg or Berlin, I say to myself, there goes one for Mum".

And Mary, gay laughing Mary wrote; "I've had six proposals in four weeks from convalescing patients. Their fancies seem to turn lightly to thoughts of love, and when the poor dears are getting well, every nursing sister looks to them like an angel of mercy. I guess after the war, I'll have to move out to Madagascar, where it's said the women are the king-pins, real matriarchs, and graciously permit twelve or fifteen husbands to support me in great splendour".

Gay little Mary with the wind-blown yellow hair and dancing eager blue eyes, skipping about the yard, chasing butterflies or digging out beetles! Always laughing, always gay, she had been the most like West Wind. Martha, swarthy like himself, had been the serious one; always a little troubled about the world of beasts and men, had been Martha. Always good company on a long drive; she gave comfort by her presence without speaking, and she too had loved rivers and fishing.

Would this cursed war never end, so that he could see them all again, all save West Wind in the sea and Jackie lying somewhere in the rubble of Dieppe. Proud was he that they had all served, all but he and he was too old and tired. The September sun was hot now and he half drowsed in the autumn sunshine ----------

Right and proper of course that she should have gone home, when she had three boys flying there and two girls in nursing units; right and proper that she should have wished to share the danger with her own kinsfolk. But she had never reached them.

What a strange detailed account a survivor who knew her, had brought him. "She was on deck, her life-belt tied firmly front and back standing at her boatstation amidships, on the starboard side and staring westward. I spoke to her and she smiled and made no reply. The ship listed so fast to port, that it was impossible to get most of the starboard boats off, some of the falls stuck, and there they banged and chaffed against the half-upturned hull. She went down five minutes after we were hit, just at dawn, and suddenly we were all in the water up to our necks, struggling, each man for himself in an icy sea. I did not see her in the water; there were so many white faces, and after a little, I knew nothing till they hauled me aboard a rescuing Corvette".

'Staring westward' that was the all-important phrase, staring westward, towards America. England and half her heart was behind her, yet she was staring westward. He was so glad and proud of that phrase. She would be unafraid, she would not cry for help but go down quietly as had her brothers on the Fire Drake.

Bravely, quietly she had sunk deeper than did ever plummet shound. Now the mother bird was gone and one of her fledglings; the others would come back some day, perhaps with grand-children. His fault had been in expecting near-perfection to last forever; everything breaks and wears out; why can we never learn that; and it is perhaps better to end quickly in mid-flight than to linger out a querulous old age.

It is more blessed to give than to receive, that was the best that Jesus said if he had said it. Perhaps the world will reverse its ideas some day and acclaim as the great man, not he who gets most but he who gives most. Was there really some far-off divine event towards which the whole creation moved or were we tossed about by blind chance in a vast chaos. 'How beauteous mankind is' had cried Miranda and in antiphonal measure, sounded the echo of Propero;

'We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and
Our little life is rounded with a sleep'.

There you had all the fiery hopeful optimism of youth, held up against the placid considered wisdom of age ----------

It was toward evening when the sky was a blaze of lemon-yellow, and blue clouds were fringed with flashes of crimson, that Jason coming over to collect the orts for his hens, found him braced against the little spruce. Before him the potato fork was stuck upright in the ground, chocolate bars and cigarettes were scattered on the grass and three rumpled letters were gripped firmly in his hand.

Epilogue

"Graves at my command
Have wad'd their sleepers, op'd and let 'em forth,
By my so potent art".

Now the local deity, that guided the destiny of the garden, was gone, but the plants showed neither regret nor sorrow; they were age-long used to birth and death, to springing up, bearing fruit, fulfilling their destiny, withering and departing. But who would dig the roots from the ground, who would gather the tall corn the clustering tomatoes that remained? Who? Someone. There is always new life, glad to supersede old death.

What does it matter when one individual vanishes from this earth to become again grass and tree and flower. It matters much to the individual who vanishes; suddenly all his quick sensation, all his thought, all his love of beauty, are melted into thin air, just as the heat and glow are gone from the toaster, when we click off the current at the breakfast table. Each individual is not only dear to a few others, but very dear to himself, and his memories, his dreams, his half-realized ideals, are his hidden treasure. In the twinkling of an eye, he loses these, and lies there motionless, inert and cold. Loss is now so common to our race, that surely we should get used to this miracle of death.

Only this morning Stahlin reports from Moscow, that his armies, since Christmas last, have killed 800,000 Germans and taken 300,000 prisoners. A Russian soldier apparently rises early, goes out, wings a brace or two of the enemy and is back by seven for bacon, eggs and coffee. And if they have killed

800,000 Germans since Christmas, how many more Russians, Germans, Poles, and wretched Jews have stumbled on sudden death in the past few years. Dying is a common place now-a-days, for people we have never seen and never known. Eight thousand bombers over Germany to-day, a grim necessity for us; are there hospitals enough to hold the wounded, graves enough to hide the dead ,in and around refugee-thronged Berlin?

Pile all the dead up like cord-wood and let them freeze stiff in the Polish snows; fetch them from the Pacific and Africa, and France and England and Italy and Greece, and from the sea's depths deeper than did ever plummet sound and pile them in piles four feet high. Then we can see what we have done to one another; then we can estimate in cords, our winter's cut of death. Or if we compute in the manner of commercial firms; place dead and wounded head to foot and they will stretch in a pitiful black line, well-nigh around the curve of the equator.

It is perhaps not so strange to see the old decline and die, but it is always passing strange to see a young man in the full flush of youth and strength and beauty struck down with a bullet through his head. In a split second, all of his laughter, his thought, his poetry, his dreams, his love, are gone; all the mechanism of his body is complete, save for that tiny channel through his brain; yet nothing works; the engine is perfect, but the inspiring current suddenly clicked off. And where do all his bright hopes and dreams and half-fulfilled desires, that are really he, drift to? Whither do they float in that swift instant? There lies his body a thing of no further importance, something only to be got out of sight and covered up. Surely the reality that was he, the thoughts that crowded his spirit must drift into some upper air----------

For ages and ages, he floated idly through giant spaces; there was no balance no reality, no up or down, nothing solid beneath his feet; blown hither and yon, he was, by gusts of warm breezes and always there was a strange distant humming, 'sounds and sweet airs that give delight and harm not'. Space would never end and Time, the enemy, ticked along like a giant alarum clock in some stratum that was older than Time.

Suddenly a warm hand was thrust in his; he could see nothing, but he could feel the steady pressure of the unseen hand, something at last to steady him in this vast stretch of uncharted, unbalanced, space. It was a comforting hand, somewhere it would guide him. Then a thick curtain of honey-coloured hair was blown across his eyes and quite blinded him, but it did not matter, for there nothing to see, nothing but the emptiness of space. A slender arm was drawn across his shoulders and his feet sensed something firm beneath them. A counter-gust tossed back the cloud of hair from his eyes, and dimly at first he perceived a wide brown treeless plain and a line of trees and a gleam.

"There's your salmon river".

"But it has no mouth".

For now he could see clearly that the river was dammed by a bar of yellow sand.

"It is a strange river that backs up, till sometimes half the plain is flooded"

"And what then?"

"Every little while, Jackie and I dig a narrow trench through the sand, and then the pent-up river tears out a broad channel and roars and rushes to the sea".

"Then the fish run up".

"Right".

"And what closes the river-mouth?"

"The wash of the sea; the breakers, that roll in the yellow sand".

"Is there a sea"? Someone said there was no sea".

"A lovely sea, deep blue, with patches of green where the shoals lie, and tawny yellow sands, and at twilight the sea is purple and wine-dark and great full-rigged ships come sailing in, the bunt-lines hauled up, and dark forms of sailors on yard and foot rope, tieing down the gaskets".

"They come home weather-beaten after long voyages?"

"Yes they come home to the harbours of their desire".

"How can they sail; the winds are so uncertain; no charts, no east or west or north or south; no up or down?"

"Hold up a wetted finger, as you used to, sailor man; see it is always West Wind"